



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823

H289s

v. 2



Secrets in every Mansion;

OR THE

Surgeon's Memorandum-Book.

A Scottish Record.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY ANNE OF SWANSEA,

AUTHOR OF

CAMBRIAN PICTURES, SICILIAN MYSTERIES, CONVICTION,
SECRET AVENGERS, CHRONICLES OF AN ILLUSTRIOUS
HOUSE, GONZALO DE BALDIVIA, &c.

"Our virtues would be proud, if our vices whipped them not; and our vices
would despair, if not cherished by our virtues."

VOL. II.

Elizabeth Wright.

London:

Printed at the Minerva Press for

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.

1818.



Secrets in every Mansion.

~~~~~

## CHAPTER I.

~~~~~

Who would exchange the pure mind's tranquil health
For guilt's unquiet state, to whom the costly
Banquet, and the downy couch, afford nor
Gratification nor repose ?

————— Much happier he,
Whose lot is cast on the bleak mountain's barren
Side, whose daily toil supplies his scanty
Meal, so innocence preside, and cheerful
Honesty sits at his frugal board. He,
When the labour of the day is past, sinks
On his humble pallet, blessing Heav'n.
Refreshing slumbers, peaceful as his mind,
Repair his wasted strength, till the next glad
Morning, peeping from the east, wakes him to
Industry.

A. I. H.

.....
" That ring recalls the memory of my guilt."

THE mind of the countess of Eastbrook,
though rankling with indignation against
her children, who continually rebelled
against parental authority, and obstinately

opposed all her schemes to secure to them great and splendid alliances, was not yet cured of her passion for match-making, nor entirely hopeless of bringing about a marriage between Mr. Norland and lady Honoria, particularly while she reflected, and with no little satisfaction, that the now by her detested Horace Winterthorn was on the eve of his departure from England, to which she most fervently prayed he might never return. She considered also, that on a heart, young and volatile as lady Honoria's, love was not likely to make a lasting impression, when the object of its folly was no longer near to keep alive the romantic inspiration.

Though very far from being in a placid temper, the countess did not fail to remember what the etiquette of good breeding demanded from a person of her high rank. She therefore seated herself at her toilet, that she might before her glass compose her features to complacency, and prepare to receive the heir of the duke of Selkirk with a smile of affability. The

countess of Eastbrook had not yet seen Mr. Norland, but the duke had described him to her, in his recommendatory letter, as a very fine young man, and a prodigious scholar; and from this account, which she believed perfectly correct, lady Eastbrook did not despair, spite of discouraging circumstances, to see Mr. Norland rival the insignificant Horace Winterthorn.—“When her brother is no longer near to support her ridiculous whim of marrying so much beneath her rank,” said lady Eastbrook, “I have no doubt but Honoria will see the propriety as well as advantage of following my advice—she will repent her former disobedience—she will be sensible of the merits of Mr. Norland, and suffer him to present her with a ducal coronet.”

Flattering her mind with yet accomplishing all its ambitious projects, lady Eastbrook hastened the adornment of her person, that she might be ready to receive the visitor, on whose attractions, personal

and mental, she relied to bring about the happy consummation of her wishes.

She had not long left her dressing-room when Mr. Norland was announced; and, to her great disappointment, she found him so much the reverse of what the duke of Selkirk had taught her to expect, that at the first glance she lost the hope of ever prevailing on lady Honoria to accept the hand of a man, whose face was vulgarly plain, and whose person was awkwardly tall. Good breeding obliged the countess to give Mr. Norland a gracious reception, but she mentally called the duke of Selkirk a stupid old dotard, and was convinced, that whatever might be the scholastic attainments of Mr. Norland, he had no external requisites for a lover.

Before dinner was announced, the countess sent for lady Honoria, who, in spite of the resolution she had formed respecting Horace Winterthorn, obeyed the summons with tremulous nerves; her fears were in some measure relieved by the sight of a stranger, who, though she

thought him one of the ugliest men she had ever seen in her life, she blessed as being the means of saving her from the severe lecture she had expected to receive. Mr. Norland received her with about fifty bows to the very ground, and a compliment to her beauty, in which he compared her to Hebe, to Iris, and the Graces. Lady Honoria felt inclined to laugh, but she remembered the good-natured old soul, his relation, and restrained herself, out of respect to him.

The father of Mr. Norland, an attorney of some eminence, had married a pretty portionless girl of the Selkirk family, and had designed this his only son for the same profession as himself, until the death of some nearer relatives left the young man the unquestionable heir to the title of Selkirk, on the demise of the old duke. This made a change in the plans of Mr. Norland, senior; and instead of placing his son at a desk in his office, to study the intricacies of the law, and pore over Blackstone, Coke, and other such dry wri-

ters, he was sent to Cambridge, to confirm his acquaintance with the classics, and form an intimacy with the Muses, that he might, when hereafter he took his seat in the House of Peers, be able to mingle in his speeches the flowers of Parnassus with attic salt.

But though education may improve, it was never yet known to bestow genius; and Mr. Erasmus Peregrine Norland returned from college a finished bockhead, but according to his own and his father's opinion, a brilliant star of erudition; and, on the *ipse dixit* of Mr. Norland, senior, the old duke of Selkirk, fast sinking into Shakespeare's last stage—"Sans eyes, sans every thing," represented him as a fine young man, and a great scholar, to the countess of Eastbrook, who at sight of him felt as much disappointment as if she had designed him the immense honour of her own fair hand.

Mr. Norland, whom the blind partiality of his doting parents had misled with respect to his person and attainments, had

come into Northumberland for the express purpose of wooing and winning lady Honoria Egerton, whose charms his eyes confessed report had not exaggerated.

To the questions of lady Honoria respecting what was going forward in the circles of fashion, Mr. Norland could make no reply; he was only in town a few weeks, and went abroad very little—was only at the opera once, just to oblige a friend who requested his company—"Is your ladyship partial to the opera?" asked Mr. Norland.

"Very much so, indeed," replied the countess; "it is the resort of people of the first rank—one meets all one's friends there."

"And you, lady Honoria," said Mr. Norland, "you, I suppose, admire and frequent the opera?"

"Undoubtedly," returned she, "I dote upon the opera."

"Do you mean," asked Mr. Norland, "as the temple where the votaries of

fashion meet, or as a place of entertainment?"

"As both," replied lady Honoria; "there is no place in the world where you hear such divine music, vocal and instrumental, or see such exquisite dancing."

"I have no ear for music," said Mr. Norland; "the singing at the opera gives me the headache; and as to the dancing, it absolutely shocks me—such exposure of the limbs!"

Lady Honoria laughed—"Why, are not fine turned limbs very delightful objects, Mr. Norland?"

"And therefore ought not to be exposed," said he. "Such shameless exhibitions extinguish modesty, and increase the licentious manners of the age. I was nearly as much disgusted at the theatres," added he, "where good moral plays are utterly excluded, for flimsy representations, fit only to make the vulgar people in the gallery laugh, and put delicacy to the blush."

“ You are a very severe censor, indeed, on our theatrical amusements,” said lady Eastbrook ; “ but as you neither frequented the opera nor the theatres, allow me to ask, Mr. Norland, how you contrived to amuse yourself in London ?”

“ I read parliamentary debates in the morning,” replied he, “ and in the evening I attended lectures.”

“ What a happy creature,” thought lady Honoria, “ will his wife be !—No box at the opera, no balls, no masquerades—only now and then, by way of a treat, the sober entertainment of a lecture on chemistry or astronomy.”

The entrance of lord Ellesmere and his guests broke the train of her thoughts, and for a moment Mr. Norland’s formality was forgotten in admiration of the easy assurance of sir Christopher Nelthorpe and his flippant sister, who, highly rouged and dressed in all the extravagance of French frippery, appeared a compound of affectation and pertness. The arrival of Mr.

Duncan and his lady, with a Mr. Hastings and his niece, Miss Beverley, relieved the countess of Eastbrook from Miss Nelthorpe's overpowering loquacity, which all her reserve and stateliness had been unable to suppress.

The earl and countess of Deveron, with Alexina Duncan and lord Eastbrook, soon after joined the party, and dinner being announced, they sat down to table. Alexina Duncan was placed on the right hand of Mr. Norland, and Miss Nelthorpe on his left; the opposite seats were occupied by lady Honoria, on the right of sir Christopher Nelthorpe, and Miss Beverley on his left.

Sir Christopher having about half finished his dinner, drank to the health of Mr. Norland.—“I remember your father very well,” said he: “a devilish keen cute lawyer—knows how to double and wind, as we sportsmen say. I think,” continued the knight, “his father was a linen-draper.”

Lady Eastbrook's proud lip curled in

scorn; she began to think it very fortunate that his person was so disagreeable, otherwise she might have been mother-in-law to the grandson of a linendraper.

Mr. Norland was by no means pleased with the tenacious memory of sir Christopher, nor disposed to answer his questions, which he affected not to hear. But the knight having drank another glass of Madeira, resumed the subject.—“The first cause your father ever carried into court,” said he, “was an action I brought against colonel Macclesfield for coursing on my manor; and he gained it too, a long-headed dog—does he practise now?”

Mr. Norland still made no reply, when sir Christopher, supposing him deaf, said—“What a pity he does not hear! I wanted to let him know that I knew his grandfather the linendraper, and his uncle the apothecary, perfectly well.”

“I have an idea,” replied lady Honoria, “that he will be equally well pleased, sir Christopher, not to be reminded of his relations.”

“Very possible,” my lady,” resumed sir Christopher, “very possible indeed. He is now the next heir to a dukedom—Gadso! I had forgot that; and it may offend his pride to be told that his whole generation on the father’s side have been shopkeepers.”

Lady Eastbrook cast a look of contempt on Mr. Norland, and another of disapprobation on sir Christopher, who fancying, from the affability of lady Honoria, that she had conceived a partiality for him, determined to make her an offer of his hand.

Mr. Norland had always disliked the idea of marrying a town-bred wife, who emerges from the nursery to plunge at once into the vortex of fashionable dissipation. He had come to Ellesmere Castle, at the instigation of the duke of Selkirk, to address lady Honoria Egerton: her person was pleasing enough, but she acknowledged a dotting fondness for operas, plays, concerts, routs, balls, and masquerades—entertainments which he

abhorred—the attending which was, in his opinion, a lamentable waste of time, and a base corruption of morals; he therefore, on the instant, determined she was no wife for him.

The loud voice and free manners of Miss Nelthorpe disgusted him—her attentions wearied him; for understanding the dignities to which he was heir, she thought his person, plain as it was, ought not to be an impediment in the way of her ambition; and having resolved, if possible, to be a duchess, she endeavoured by every means in her power to attract him; but to all her overstrained politeness she obtained only a few formal bends of his stiff neck, and a cold negative or affirmative to her questions.

“Were you ever at Paris, sir?” asked Miss Nelthorpe.

“No, madam,” replied Mr. Norland, bowing.

“Bless me! I wonder at that,” resumed the lady; “most of our English gentlemen consider a trip to France necessary to

complete their education. You speak French, no doubt, sir?"

"Yes, madam," replied Mr. Norland.

"But Italian is the sweetest language to make love in. You are a proficient in that also, I dare say?" said Miss Nelthorpe. "You doubtless speak Italian?"

"No, madam," was the reply.

Provoked at his cold formality, she addressed Miss Beverley—"Well, really I expected to have found you married, Miss Beverley, on my return from France, but here I find all my old playmates single still. What! are there no men in the country? or have you taken vows of celibacy?"

Miss Beverley blushed deeply, considering the question indelicate before so many strangers, and replied, that being perfectly happy in her present situation, she had never wished to change it.

"Are you quite sure you never tell fibs, my dear?" said Miss Nelthorpe; "ah! that blush betrays you, child."

"We are apt to judge others by our-

selves," replied sir Christopher; "you are in a confounded hurry to get a husband yourself, Clara, and suspect Miss Beverley of the same impatience."

"Certainly I have no intention, brother, to die a virgin, and endow almshouses with my fortune," returned Miss Nelthorpe; "but no more of your coarse remarks, sir Christopher, I beg—they really shock my delicacy."

Sir Christopher burst into a loud laugh, at which Miss Nelthorpe looked very indignant; but being requested to hand a nectarine (the dessert being on the table) to Miss Duncan, she said—"Apropos, Miss Duncan, I knew I had a question to ask you, though my giddy head forgets every thing—will you do me the favour to tell me why all the gentlemen call you the *Rose of Hexham*?"

Alexis blushed and was silent; but Miss Nelthorpe repeating her question, she replied—"I really do not know."

Lord Ellesmere saw the modest blush crimson her cheek, and he felt a disgust

for her whose envy and indelicacy had raised it.—“Permit me, madam,” said he to Miss Nelthorpe, “to answer your question. Miss Duncan has obtained the appellation of the *Rose of Hexham* from being decidedly the most beautiful woman in it.”

“Really!” said Miss Nelthorpe, drawing the word; “I thank your lordship for the information. I know very little of Hexham, but I think I recollect before I went abroad it was famous for ugly old maids.”

“It is now the reverse,” observed Mr. Duncan; “it is famous for handsome young ones.”

Before Miss Nelthorpe’s question, of why Alexina was called the *Rose of Hexham*, Mr. Norland, though seated next to her, had scarcely looked at her; but on hearing the reply of lord Ellesmere, he stole some glances at her face, which he thought infinitely handsomer than lady Honoria’s. He remarked, too, that she had spoken but seldom, and that all she

had uttered appeared to be dictated by propriety, and delivered with modesty.

Sir Christopher, who during dinner had drank several glasses of Madeira, began to be what he thought extremely witty. He described the characters of most of the gentry of Hexham, of whom he did not speak in the most favourable terms, particularly of Mr. and Mrs. Ferment.—“They have not lived at Hexham many years,” said the knight; “and they were almost driven from the town whence they came.”

“Driven!” repeated Mr. Duncan; “surely, sir Christopher, you must mistake?”

“No, sir, I do not mistake—I am perfectly correct in what I say: if they are friends of yours, Mr. Duncan,” continued the knight, “I am sorry to tell you, that their troublesome, meddling, mischievous dispositions so irritated the people of the town where they came from, that they almost drove them out; and by what I can understand from their neighbour, Miss

Frasier, the Ferments are held in nearly the same detestation by the inhabitants of Hexham: and now, Mr. Duncan, if you are disposed to call me out, why, I never was known to flinch from my word or my bottle."

"I am no duellist, sir Christopher," replied Mr. Duncan, "and were I less abhorrent of a practice which in my opinion militates against divine and human laws, I should not feel disposed to risk my character in defence of a man with whom I have only a common acquaintance; though certainly, for the honour of humanity, I should hope Mr. Ferment merits a better character than what you, sir Christopher, have received of him from a peevish old maid."

"Take care what you say," resumed the knight—"Mr. Hastings is laying siege to her beauty or her money-bags; which, Mr. Hastings, is it—Plato or Cupid?"

Before Mr. Hastings had time to utter more than the single word neither, Mr. Norland repeated—"Plato! Permit me to

say you are under a mistake, sir Christopher; Plato was a celebrated philosopher of Athens."

"Was he?" replied sir Christopher; "then he is no friend of mine—I hate philosophers. Besides, they are like poets, I believe, a poor set of rascallions; so I could never mean Plato when I joked my friend Hastings."

Mr. Hastings was a quiet old bachelor, who had indeed once or twice visited Miss Frasier, with the idea, that by uniting their fortunes, his own lonely state as well as hers would be rendered more comfortable. But some little discoveries that he accidentally made of the temper of Miss Frasier fixed him in the resolve not to put "his free condition into circumspection or confine," judging it more prudent to remain a solitary old bachelor than become a henpecked husband.

Mr. Norland, finding that Mr. Hastings made no answer for himself, said—"It is Plutus, the god of riches, you mean, sir Christopher: he was the son of Jasius

by Ceres, the goddess of corn; and the Greeks represented him as blind, because he distributed wealth to those who were unworthy; they made him lame, because he came too slow for their desires; but they gave him wings, to intimate that riches fly away with greater rapidity from, than they are gained by, mankind."

"Aye, sir, from fools," replied sir Christopher; "but wise men know how to hold fast. But as for the gods, I know nothing about them; though I remember when I was a boy I used to read in Ovid about *Jupiter*, and *Satan*, and *Herkelus*; but I like the goddesses best; and so, Mr. Norland, if you please we will toast the goddesses all together in a bumper."

The countess of Eastbrook had sat for some time out of mere politeness, for her dignity was offended to see a vulgar Northumbrian engross the whole conversation at table; and she was much gratified when she saw the countess of Deveron rise to withdraw. When the ladies had seated themselves in the drawing-room, she was -

prevented from venting her indignation by the presence of Miss Nelthorpe, who, unawed by her repulsive *hauteur*, asked a thousand silly and impertinent questions, and ran on without ceasing about her regret at leaving Paris, her determination to return, and the superiority of the French over the English in their invention of amusing spectacles.—“I declare,” continued she, “ever since my return to Northumberland, I have been almost dead with ennui.”

“And yet one would suppose,” said lady Eastbrook, sarcastically, “that your brother, sir Christopher Nelthorpe, would prevent your spirits from sinking into languor.”

“On the contrary,” replied Miss Nelthorpe, “his boisterous manners and loud voice make me quite nervous, so absolutely unlike what I have been accustomed to. In France, the gentlemen are all softness and refined politeness—every word is a compliment, and every action an attempt

to oblige. When my aunt, madame Demoline, was alive, we had concerts every night; but sir Christopher has no ear except for the music of his kennel, and prefers the cry of his hounds to the finest singing in the world."

The grimace and affectation with which all this was uttered astonished Mrs. Duncan, Alexina, and Miss Beverley, as much as it diverted the rest of the party, to whom such contortions of face and limbs were not new.

The countess of Deveron, perceiving she wished to display her vocal abilities, said—"And at these concerts, Miss Nelthorpe, I suppose you performed a distinguished part?"

"Oh dear, no, madam, no; I am but a poor performer," returned Miss Nelthorpe; "I play the harp a little, to be sure, and signior Volino gave me some instruction in singing; he said I had a fine voice—but I forget I am in England, where all self-praise is called vanity."

"We are all of us fond of music," said lady Deveron, "and shall feel much gratified in hearing you sing."

"I am dreadfully hoarse," replied Miss Nelthorpe, "and on that account must beg to be excused; besides, I never can sing without an instrument."

"That will not excuse you," said lady Honoria; "I have a harp, and positively you must oblige us."

Miss Nelthorpe made a thousand objections, for the express purpose of having them obviated; she tried to cough, protested she was quite out of voice, and at last suffered the harp to be placed before her, when in a very indifferent style she played and squalled a French song. To lady Deveron and Alexina, both of whom possessed exquisite taste, and very superior execution, the singing of Miss Nelthorpe was very bad, and her playing worse; but politeness compelled them to praise the effort they had solicited.

Lady Eastbrook knew nothing of music, but as a fashionable accomplishment;

Miss Beverley could play a few country-dances on the piano-forte, and her musical science went no farther.

But Mrs. Duncan, who had a good ear, and had been accustomed to the fine mellow voice of her husband, and the melodious tones of Alexina, gave Miss Nelthorpe no praise, but asked if she could sing the "Braes of Yarrow," "Tay's winding Stream," or any Scotch ballads?

"Scotch ballads!" repeated Miss Nelthorpe; "no, ma'am, I know nothing of Scotch ballads—I never heard any thing of the kind at Paris; I sing none but Italian, French, or German music."

"I am surprised at that," replied Mrs. Duncan, "for no country in the world excels Scotland in music."

"I am of your opinion, Mrs. Duncan," said the countess of Deveron; "and you, my love," addressing Alexina, "shall give Miss Nelthorpe a specimen of its elegance, its sweetness, and excellence."

Alexina played and sung a simple Scottish ballad with so much taste and feeling

that tears filled the eyes of lady Deveron ; and Mrs. Duncan said it reminded her of the days of her youth, when Alexander Duncan came down the burn to woo her.

Miss Nelthorpe affected ecstasy at the performance of Alexina ; but in the midst of her extravagant praise, it was evident she thought her own playing and singing infinitely superior.

After the departure of the ladies, sir Christopher Nelthorpe became so ambitious of the character of a jolly fellow, that the earl of Deveron, still in a weak state of health, was obliged to retire from the room, being nearly stunned with a bacchanalian song, which he vociferated with the lungs of a Stentor. Mr. Norland looked upon him as a monster ; while Mr. Hastings, blushing for the conduct of his neighbour, who had become so intoxicated as to be unable to sit on his chair, went to seek his servants, that they might convey him from a company where his ap-

pearance created universal disgust. Mr. Duncan had often seen the knight in a similar situation, and the temperance of his own habits made him pass a severe censure in his mind on the perpetual inebriety of sir Christopher.

Mr. Duncan left the room with the earl of Deveron, who taking his arm, led him to the lawn.—“How lamentable,” said the earl, “is the state of man! All are the slaves of vice.”

“All have errors,” replied Mr. Duncan; “but I trust many are free from vice.”

“None,” resumed the earl—“no, not one; but disgusting as drunkenness appears, I know a vice still more hideous.”

“That, I think,” replied Mr. Duncan, “is scarcely possible.”

“Yes, Duncan,” said the earl, “ambition is a vice more horrible. Drunkenness brings with it some hours of forgetfulness; the fumes of wine, by stupifying reason, produce an oblivion of thought—in that there is some happiness—yes, inanity is happiness; but ambition affords

no peaceful moment—its maddening impulses urge on to guilt; then comes remorse to ‘murder sleep.’ Oh then,” said he, with a harrowing groan, “then one night, nay one hour, of dreamless sleep, could it be purchased, were worth an empire! Look at me, Duncan—see my sunk eyes and haggard countenance! This is the work of ambition. That drunkard, wallowing in the filth of his intemperance, is happier than I; the hours of his night will pass in forgetfulness, and to-morrow he will rise from his couch, nothing the worse for his excess—while I, the victim of ambition, with health destroyed——”

“No, not destroyed,” interrupted Mr. Duncan; “it is yet, I trust, in the power of medicine to restore your health.”

The earl stopped, and looking earnestly in Mr. Duncan’s face, asked—

“Canst thou administer to a mind diseased—
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow?”

“If I were honoured with your lord-

ship's confidence," replied Mr. Duncan, "I should not despair to do even this."

"Can you raise the dead?" asked the earl.

"No," said Mr. Duncan, "I cannot boast such skill."

"No!" repeated the earl, mournfully; "no—this is a task impossible to man! neither can you restore my mind's health, or 'cleanse my bosom of the perilous stuff' that weighs it down."

At this moment they were under the drawing-room windows, and Alexina entering the balcony, asked them if they would take tea?

For a moment the earl gazed on her, then exclaimed—"How wonderful is the resemblance! Just so have I seen her look—such were her dimpled smiles! Oh, memory, memory! how busy art thou with my brain! Her voice too——"

"Of whom does your lordship speak?" asked Mr. Duncan.

"Speak?" replied the earl, as if unconscious of what he had uttered; "I spoke

of no one—or if I did, it was of a vision that, in the smiling form of beauty, rushes for a moment on my imagination, then leaves it dark and desolate. Duncan,” continued the earl, grasping his hand, “Duncan, I do believe you are an honourable man, and I will tell you I have a scorpion in my bosom—but question me no further; should I disclose the secrets of my soul, Constance, my wife, my gentle Constance—I should murder her!”

Though commanded by the earl to silence, Mr. Duncan would have pursued the subject of his secret sorrows, had not lord Eastbrook and Mr. Norland joined them.

“’Pon my nobility,” said lord Eastbrook, “that sir Christopher Nelthorpe is a beast! There he loies, floundering loike a whale, under the table; and I fancy, as Falstaff says, it will requoire levers to raise him.”

“It is a matter of infinite surprise to me,” observed Mr. Norland, “that a gentleman of ancient family should have so

little respect for decorum, so little regard for his own character, to swallow so much wine as to reduce himself to the situation of a swine ! A gentleman ought to remember——”

“ He is no gentleman !” interrupted lord Eastbrook.

“ Pardon me, my lord,” said Mr. Norland, “ for taking the liberty of offering a contradiction to your assertion ; sir Christopher Nelthorpe is certainly entitled to the rank and title of gentleman : his family, that is, his ancestors——”

“ Let them rest quietly in their graves, my foine fellow,” resumed lord Eastbrook ; “ for should they rise again, they must blush for the degeneracy of their successor. He a gentleman indeed ! knows nothing at all of the manners of hoigh loife—has never been accustomed to fashionable society—Who ever heard of a well-bred man eating soup twice ?”

“ Eating soup twice !” repeated Mr. Norland, with a stupid stare ; “ I really am amazed ! If eating soup twice subjects

a person to the disgrace of being set down by fashionable people as ill-bred, what is to be said of their eating other aliments, such as beef or mutton, which, with all due submission to your lordship, they must in the course of their lives have eaten times innumerable? Nor do I opine that nature, with all her varieties, could present an untasted viand for every meal during a man's life, which you know is sometimes prolonged to the great length of one hundred years, nay, sometimes many more than that; as for instance, old Parr, who was one hundred and fifty-two years old when he died. Now your lordship knows that in every year there are three hundred and sixty-five days, always observing that every fourth year, that is to say, bissextile, or leap year——”

“ Ha, ha, ha, ha !” roared lord Eastbrook, in a burst of laughter.

Mr. Duncan could scarcely keep his countenance, and even the melancholy earl of Deveron smiled; while lord Eastbrook said——“ I beg your pardon, Mr.

Norland, but 'pon my nobility—ha, ha, ha, ha!—I cannot for the soul of me help laughing to think how widely you have mistaken my meaning! I did not desoign to say it was ill-bred for a man to eat soup every day of his loife, if he loikes it.”

Mr. Norland looked more silly than before, as he uttered, in a tone of astonishment—“ No! I really understood——”

“ That is,” resumed lord Eastbrook, “ you misunderstood: but, my foine fellow, to spare you the trouble of calculating, I will explain my meaning. It is considered, among fashionable people, as an instance of vulgar breeding, when a person eats soup loike an alderman at a turtle-feast.”

“ Oh, now I believe I comprehend your lordship's meaning,” said Mr. Norland; “ to be fashionable, you must not take above a ladlefull of soup, even if you should happen to prefer it to any thing else at table.”

“ Certainly, my foine fellow, certainly,” replied lord Eastbrook; “ no man who

values his reputation will take soup twice."

"I really opine and believe," said Mr. Norland, "that if reputation depends on the observance of eating a spoonful more or less of soup, and other equally trivial circumstances, I shall never cut a figure in fashionable life."

"Yes, you will, 'pon my nobility!" said lord Eastbrook, "I am convinced you will, and that a very conspicuous one: singularity is the rage, no matter in what way—conversation, opinions, dress, carriage—no matter what, so it is but new; singularity, be assured, will always attract and have a crowd of followers."

The word singularity did not exactly please Mr. Norland; but before he could arrange his ideas to form a reply to the rattle-brain peer, Mr. Duncan said—"I am happy to hear that singularity is the rage, and likely to be followed, for it is in the chapter of possibilities that some person of rank will introduce the virtues.

which, by what I can hear of high life, are seldom found in fashionable circles."

"Yes," replied Mr. Norland, "the virtues of temperance, sobriety, and chastity—these I will endeavour to introduce; for I will never be found at feasts, I will never make one at a convivial meeting, I will never be seen with a frail one on my arm, be she ever so fair."

"Yours is a sort of singularity that will not take," said lord Eastbrook; "this is the age of mirth, extravagance, and hoaxing; temperance, sobriety, and chastity, may do when a man gets old, but youth is the season of frolic, when turning his back on the chilly temple of Diana, he empties a flask at the shrine of Bacchus, just to give him spirits to adore the charms of Venus. There, my foine fellow," addressing Mr. Norland, "there is a speech in your own way—rich of the classical fruit."

"Bacchus is a deity to be abhorred," replied Mr. Norland, "for by intoxicating the brain, and drowning reason, men are

led to commit the most disgraceful and enormous crimes; and as to Venus——”

“ Hold there, my foine fellow,” said lord Eastbrook; “ not a word against Venus ! The charms of woman lead a man——”

“ To guilt, to perdition !” said the earl of Deveron, and rushed wildly towards the castle.

Mr. Norland’s eyes followed his retreating steps with looks of astonishment.—

“ The earl of Deveron thinks of Venus as I do,” said he; “ though, if I could be certain of just such a wife as his countess, I should not fear to marry, the lady in question having a low voice, a mild manner, and a sedate look.”

“ The countess of Deveron,” replied Mr. Duncan, “ is beautiful and amiable; but I see a lady who is graciously inviting me to her presence, and as I profess myself a votary of Venus, I must obey the call.”

Mr. Duncan withdrew.

“ Come,” said lord Eastbrook, taking the arm of Mr. Norland, “ come, my foine fellow—I suppose you have not so great a

disloike to female society as to prefer returning to the doining-room, rather than join them?"

"I can have no sort of objection to the society of the ladies assembled here," returned Mr. Norland; "the lady countess, your honoured mother, being a person of exalted rank, and very ancient family, is undoubtedly to be greatly respected."

"And lady Honoria Egerton, my sister," said lord Eastbrook; "is she not worthy of admiration?"

"Most certainly," replied Mr. Norland; "she is very pretty, and has wandering restless eyes, that seem to be in search of lovers; then she is very volatile, and seems inclined to pleasure."

Lord Eastbrook laughed, and wished lady Honoria could hear him describe her.

"I really opine," resumed Mr. Norland, "that I have done great justice to the young lady, for whom I feel much respect, as the daughter of the countess of Eastbrook."

"Then there is Miss Beverley," resumed

lord Eastbrook ; “ you must be pleased with her, so modest, so silent ? ”

“ Modesty and silence become a female ; ” said Mr. Norland ; “ women should not be bold and loquacious ; bashfulness and timidity are their ornaments, reserve and silence their greatest charms. The females of old——”

“ Not a word, my foine fellow, about old women,” interrupted lord Eastbrook ; “ I detest old women—let us speak of the young ones—What do you think of Miss Nelthorpe ? I have an idea she would not disloike your attentions.”

“ She rolls her eyes about too much,” replied Mr. Norland ; “ besides she paints, like another Jezebel, and I should not wonder if, like Jezebel of old, she came at last to the dogs ; besides, she is a great talker, and gives her opinions with an air so masculine, that by a natural concatenation of ideas, it does not appear improbable but she would knock a man down who should presume to contradict her ; then

her attire is gaudy, and put on to display, not conceal, her person, which is not the intent of apparel ; for it appears, from the account given by Moses——”

“ What, getting among the ancients again ?” exclaimed lord Eastbrook ; “ for pity’s sake, my foine fellow, let the antediluvians alone, and stick to the moderns.”

“ There may be some modern females, no doubt, worthy regard,” said Mr. Norland ; “ but what are the generality of women ? Mere frivolity, painted baubles, and puffs of vanity, compared to the wife of Brutus, the mother of the Gracchi, or the daughter of Alexius Commenus ; but in this degenerate age, it is hopeless to expect the fidelity of Portia, the maternal solicitude of Cornelia, or the learning of Anna Commena.”

“ Degenerate age !” repeated lord Eastbrook ; “ you are quoite out there, ’pon my nobility ! This is the age of literature, refinement, and science ; and as to the fair ones of the present age, it is my opinion

they far exceed the most famous matrons and virgins of the elder time, even when Rome was in its glory——”

“ Pardon me, my lord,” interrupted Mr. Norland, with some impatience, “ if I take the liberty to contradict your opinion; and permit me, in defence of my assertion, to say——”

“ Say what you please, my foine fellow,” resumed lord Eastbrook, “ but you will never persuade me that Rome ever boasted, among her most distinguished virgins, a more perfectly modest or lovelier creature than the *Rose of Hexham*.”

Mr. Norland looked bewildered, and at last said——“ We were not, as I conceive, my lord, speaking of flowers, though no doubt the gardens of Rome produced them in great profusion, as perfumes were among the luxuries——”

Lord Eastbrook burst into a loud laugh, and at last told the wondering Norland——“ I did not allude to flowers or perfumes—— I was speaking of a young and beautiful woman——What do you think of Miss Dun-

can, who sat at your left hand at the dinner-table?"

"The daughter of the gentleman who has just left us?" said Mr. Norland; "the young lady introduced to me by the countess of Deveron?"

"The same—does she not merit the appellation of a Rose?" asked the earl.

"I remember she had nothing obtrusive about her," said Mr. Norland, "and gave a proof of discretion in not speaking much; but whether her face was beautiful or otherwise, I profess myself ignorant. But, if not disagreeable to your lordship, I should like a cup of tea, which I never fail to take, considering it an innocent beverage, and conducive to study, by aiding digestion, and clearing the brain from the fumes of liquor. If you please, we will join the ladies in the drawing-room; where I will not fail to observe the countenance of Miss Duncan."

"The examination will be attended with danger," returned lord Eastbrook; "you may lose your heart—and if you

should, your case is hopeless, for she is cold as ice ; she is not to be won."

" That is strange," said Mr. Norland ; " young, beautiful, and not to be won ! It passes comprehension, and, with all submission to your lordship's word, belief also."

" Orthodox for all that," replied the peer ; " she has actually refused to be countess of Eastbrook."

Mr. Norland saw nothing surprising in such refusal, for, according to his notion, the young man before him was in dress a coxcomb, in learning an ass, and in manners a bear.

On entering the drawing-room, lord Eastbrook took a seat next to Miss Nelthorpe, who having entered during dinner into the character and disposition of Mr. Norland, and discovered that his formality was by no means likely to indulge (should she ensnare his heart) her love of splendour, and intention of dashing into all the extravagances of high life, had given up the idea of being a duchess, received him with

all the studied grace of a French coquette. Having learned that her brother had been taken home in a state of intoxication, she affected to blush, and expressed so much regret and confusion, that his lordship began to have a better opinion of her than he had before entertained; and as her marrying a man of rank was ever uppermost in her thoughts, and the guide of her conduct, she smiled and flirted, and ogled and sighed, till the young peer thought her infinitely agreeable, and though not so handsome as Miss Duncan, more attractive in her manners, because divested of the reserve which in her forbade all approach to familiarity.

The carriage of sir Christopher had returned to Ellesmere Castle for Miss Nelthorpe; but when the hour of separation arrived, she expressed so much timidity, that she was offered a bed at the castle. This was exactly what Miss Nelthorpe wished; and the next morning lord Ellesmere drove her home in his new carriage, which he had named an *eaglette*.

During their ride, his lordship made love, and Miss Nelthorpe expressed her fears that he was only jesting, but contrived to let him see that his flatteries were so agreeable that she wished them serious.

Sir Christopher had an engagement to dine at Hexham. Lord Eastbrook remained all day at Aynhoe Lodge, and in the evening departed, so much in love with Miss Nelthorpe, that he felt quite miserable at the idea of being obliged to quit the country in a few days.

Mr. Norland, true to his word, examined every feature in the face of Miss Duncan, which he found as beautiful as lord Eastbrook had described: her manners too were gentle, and her voice was the sweetest he had ever listened to. His relation, the old duke of Selkirk, had pointed out lady Honoria Egerton as a proper wife for him, her age, her rank, and fortune, being all equally desirable; but the manners of lady Honoria, and her avowed passion for the idle, and, in his opinion, licentious, diversions and entertainments of

the fashionable world, were to him insurmountable objections to the alliance. He had seen needlework in the fingers of Miss Duncan, and he thought, with a young person of her turn of mind, not given to extravagant pleasures, who could find employment for her time, without seeking to kill it by engaging in frivolous amusements, he might hope for domestic happiness: to be sure, her family was not a titled one, neither was it to be supposed her fortune would be any thing considerable; but these were trifling considerations to him, who determined to have a wife unacquainted with and disinclined towards the vices and follies of high life. Perceiving that Alexina paid a most respectful deference to the opinions of her father, Mr. Norland having settled it in his own mind that she was exactly what he wished for a wife, young, lovely, modest, and gentle, he determined to ride over to Hexham, and declare his wishes and intentions to Mr. Duncan, nothing doubting but he, properly impressed

with the honour offered in the alliance of a person of his consequence, would gladly accept his proposals, and prepare his daughter to receive his addresses with a due sense of his condescension, and the proper recollection of her own inferiority. "From Miss Duncan," said Mr. Norland, "I may expect deference and becoming obedience, but if I marry a rantipole lady of quality, she will expect the indulgence of all her extravagant whims, and laugh at the regularity and decorum which I am resolved shall be observed in my family—No riotous parties at home, no racketing abroad, perverting the order of nature by turning night into day. The duke of Selkirk may possibly object to my marrying the daughter of a surgeon; but the kind of wife I wish is not to be found in the higher circles, gentle, modest, and submissive; and such, or I am greatly deceived in her disposition, will Miss Duncan prove. Therefore my honoured relation, the duke of Selkirk, must pardon me for preferring my own

judgment of what will conduce to my happiness and domestic comfort to his."

Such were the cogitations of Mr. Norland as he rode over to Hexham, where he was received with all the formalities and ceremonials so gratifying to his pride, by Mrs. Duncan, who, though living so far north, knew how to conduct herself to all degrees of people, and now, by the deep curtsey with which she replied to the salutation of Mr. Norland, evinced plainly that she was aware that her visitor was the presumptive heir to a dukedom : but though Mrs. Duncan was much pleased with Mr. Norland's compliments on her own good looks, she was not equally so when he spoke of her daughter's beauty, a theme to her particularly displeasing ; and she was not sorry when Mr. Duncan's return home gave a different turn to the conversation.

With much roundabout circumlocution, Mr. Norland at last made the motive of his call intelligible to Mr. Duncan, who did not seem so sensible of the honour he

was intending to confer on his family, as his pride and vanity expected; nor was Mrs. Duncan much less surprised than himself to hear Mr. Duncan so coldly express his thanks for the honour of his approbation of Alexina.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Norland, “I approve, as I before signified, her person and her manners, which are consonant with my ideas of feminine modesty; for had she been loud in conversation, and forward in behaviour, I should never have suffered my eye to mislead my judgment; but considering her much superior to most of the young women we meet in this frivolous age, on mature consideration I have thought proper to acquaint you, her parents and natural protectors, with my impression in her favour.”

Mr. Norland paused, supposing he had now sufficiently explained himself, and waited for the joyful thanks of Mr. Duncan; but with much calmness the surgeon asked—“Pray, sir, was your father ever in Scotland?”

Mr. Norland felt displeased at a question so vague, and, according to his conception, not a little disrespectful. He however replied—"No, sir; my father was born and bred at Stafford, and the extent of his travels has been from thence to the metropolis."

"I beg your pardon, sir," resumed Mr. Duncan, "but I should be glad to be informed whether Mrs. Norland, your mother, was ever in Aberdeenshire?"

"No, sir," replied Mr. Norland; "nor in any other shire of North Britain."

Mrs. Duncan thought her husband was invading her province; she absolutely stared to hear him so inquisitive about what she believed could in no way concern him; and fearful of offending the great man who sat opposite her, she was ready to exclaim—fie on thee, Alexander! when he again preferred the question—"Pray, sir, has your father had more than one wife?"

Again Mr. Norland replied—"No, sir;

my father and mother were married in the town where they now live, when they were both very young, and I am the only fruit of their marriage. By your questions, Mr. Duncan, I am led to opine that you wish the person who leads your daughter to the hymenean altar, to have Scotch blood in his veins; but of this, sir, I cannot boast, and if it proves an obstacle—if you have, I say, an objection to a downright Englishman, why I can only lament your prejudice in favour of your own country, and respectfully begging your pardon for this intrusion on your time, take my leave, though I should have supposed my present situation in life, and future expectations——”

Mr. Duncan interrupted a speech which he perceived would conclude with disgusting arrogance, by asking if he had mentioned the subject of his partiality to Alexina?

Another “no, sir,” issued from the lips of Mr. Norland, who also added—“I con-

sidered it most proper to take the opinions of her parents first. I have not spoken to the young lady, because I supposed she would, in an affair of so much importance, be guided by their opinions, and act in conformity to their will."

"But against her own will," resumed Mr. Duncan, "I would not bestow the hand of my Alexina on an emperor: she has sense above her years, and she has also the discretion that will direct her to act properly in every circumstance of life. Be assured, sir, I have no predilection for any particular country, and if my beloved girl approves your suit, my concurrence, and that of Mrs. Duncan, will follow her decision."

Mr. Norland's countenance began to brighten, and he accepted the refreshments politely offered him with much apparent satisfaction; and with many expressions of kindness to Mrs. Duncan, and a hearty shake of Mr. Duncan's hand, returned again to Ellesmere Castle, to declare to

Alexina that her parents gave her permission to accept his addresses.

After the departure of Mr. Norland, Mrs. Duncan expected that her husband would say something on the subject of Alexina's good-fortune, in having such a very advantageous offer, but no sooner had the door closed on Mr. Norland, than he retired to his study.

"Ay, there he goes, to pore over his musty books," said Mrs. Duncan, in a tone of chagrin, "instead of expressing his joy that the girl is likely to be a duchess," for it never entered Mrs. Duncan's imagination that Alexina would be so blind to her own interest as to refuse such an offer.—"Well, to be sure," continued she, "when Alexina is a duchess, we shall quit this nasty dull place, and live in London, and cut a figure in life, among persons of the first rank and quality. Then what envy there will be among the Hexham gentry! Poor Mrs. Ferment will burst with spite, and the lawyer, instead

of wanting to draw up articles of separation between Alexander Duncan and me, may wish to be employed in making Miss Duncan's marriage-settlement. I declare I must hurry dinner, for I shall be quite miserable till I have told Miss Frasier about this grand offer, and then I am certain, before to-morrow morning, all Hexham will have the intelligence."

While she was ringing the bell, to order the cloth to be laid, Mr. Duncan entered the room, looking very grave.

"Bless me! Alexander," said his lady, "what is the matter? are you ill?"

"No," replied he, "no, Margaret, I am not ill—I am only thoughtful."

"Oh, is that all? I suppose you are thinking which of the squares in London you shall take a house in."

"Take a house in London!" repeated Mr. Duncan; "why, has any thing happened to oblige me to quit Hexham?"

"Oblige you to quit! La! Alexander, how strange you appear, just as if you did not comprehend to what I allude!"

“ Why, how is it possible, my dear,” replied he, “ that I can understand you, when you talk about taking a house in London, a place which you know disagrees so much with my constitution, that I was never there a month without being unwell.”

“ Ay, very true,” said his wife, looking extremely grave, “ very true—I had forgot that you could not live in London. It is a great pity though.”

“ Why so?” asked Mr. Duncan; “ I thought you were particularly partial to Hexham? You know I settled here merely because you liked the country.”

“ I am very much obliged to you, Alexander,” returned Mrs. Duncan; “ but you know, when Alexina marries, and is a duchess, she will form very great connexions of course, and——”

Mrs. Duncan paused, and reddened deep as scarlet, as her husband said—
“ Come, I will finish the sentence for you—‘ and much as I have hated her, I shall be happy to gain distinction by her mar-

riage.' Fie on the meanness of the thought! But make up your mind to the disappointment, Margaret, for, take my word for it, Alexina Duncan will never marry Mr. Norland."

"Not marry Mr. Norland!" repeated Mrs. Duncan: "why not? I am sure he is a very fine figure of a man—Not marry a person who is heir to a dukedom! She must be out of her senses if she refuses such an offer; and besides, you have, you know, given your consent."

"Very true," replied Mr. Duncan; "but she has not given hers, and I prophesy never will. If she thinks him a fine figure, it will be very well, but in my opinion he is as awkward and ungainly a person as ever I beheld; and again I repeat, Alexina has too much taste to approve Mr. Norland, and too much honour to marry for interest."

Mr. Duncan saying he should be back before dinner was served, went out, and Mrs. Duncan sat for some time beating the carpet with her foot.—"Not marry a

man with such great expectations as Mr. Norland!" said Mrs. Duncan. "Well, this exceeds all former folly: most men are happy to get their base-born children off their hands, but Mr. Duncan seems as if he could not bear to part with his: but certainly the girl will never be such a fool as to refuse being a duchess—I shall take care to give her a little advice upon the subject, and as I am going to send her a parcel, I will take the opportunity of letting her know my sentiments. She then wrote the following letter:—

"DEAR ALEXINA,

"I am greatly pleased to have it in my power to congratulate you upon the influence of your beauty, of which Mr. Norland is so sensible, that he has this day waited upon us to propose himself as a husband for you. I have no doubt but you will have discretion enough to see all the advantages that will result from your acceptance of his generous offer. Remem-

ber, it will be a very grand thing for you, and that dukes are not as plenty as gooseberries, and such matches are not to be made every day. Every person of your acquaintance speaks in high terms of your excellent understanding; therefore it is the less necessary for me to give you advice on this unexpected good fortune. Mr. Norland, with whose manners I am much pleased, has the perfect concurrence of your father, and I very much approve the offer, which I trust you will see the great advantage of accepting, and the extreme folly of refusing. With the hope of speedily seeing you a duchess, I remain,

“ DEAR ALEXINA,

“ Yours, most affectionately,

“ MARGARET DUNCAN.”

Alexina read this epistle with wonder and regret—with wonder that a gentleman could be so indelicate and unfeeling as to attempt to influence her parents to favour his suit, before he had taken the

trouble to acquaint himself whether his addresses would be accepted by her whom he pretended to love—with regret that a person so every way ill-suited to her taste should meet the approbation and obtain the concurrence of her father.—“ But though my father must not know the imprudent prepossession of my heart,” said Alexina, “ yet he will listen to my objections to Mr. Norland—this dearest, best of fathers will not constrain the inclinations of his child. Alas !” continued she, gazing on the ring that encircled her finger, “ alas ! this talisman is not a spell of force sufficiently strong to resist the enchantments of love.”

Mrs. Euston, recovered in some degree from her indisposition by the assurances of protection given her by lady Honoria, had quitted her bed, and was acting all the grimaces of weak nerves, when the countess of Eastbrook, unwished, and equally unexpected, entered the room.

Mrs. Euston affected to tremble; but

lady Honoria, prepared by her brother, supported her ladyship's rage, without tears or fainting.

The countess, in very harsh terms, expressed her utter disapprobation of Horace Winterthorn, whom she loaded with every opprobrious epithet, among the gentlest of which was "artful designing fellow."

Lady Honoria warmly vindicated the chosen of her heart from this charge of meanness, protesting that a more noble and generous mind was not to be found among the human race.

The countess having exhausted her terms of reproach, against the character of captain Winterthorn, insisted on lady Honoria giving her a solemn promise not to correspond with him during the time he was abroad; but this request lady Honoria peremptorily refused.

"This, madam," said lady Eastbrook, turning to Mrs. Euston, "is the effect of your pernicious system of education; but I will expose your morals to the world—I will prevent any other family of distinc-

tion from having its daughters ruined by your abominable precepts and connivance."

Mrs. Euston made no reply to this menace, but sunk at once from her chair upon the carpet, sweeping, in her fall, a pair of wax-candles into the lap of lady Eastbrook, whose dress being chiefly composed of fine lace, was in an instant set in a blaze.

Lady Honoria flew, shrieking, to the assistance of her mother, whose loud cries soon brought the countess of Deveron, lord Eastbrook, Mr. Norland, and Alexina, to the apartment.

Lord Eastbrook threw a large ewer of water over the flames, which were at last extinguished, having entirely destroyed her ladyship's expensive lace dress, and scorched her hands severely.

Mr. Norland, with much trouble, raised Mrs. Euston from the floor, and having reclined her on a couch, said he believed she was dead.

: "Dead!" shrieked lady Eastbrook—"Oh, Heaven forbid! if she is dead, I shall be

accused of murdering her!" She would then have flown to the couch, to ascertain the extent of her misfortune, but the countess of Deveron and Alexina led her, almost by force, from the apartment, requesting her to remember that she endangered her own life, by remaining in the wet condition to which she was reduced by the application of the water.

The departure of the countess soon restored Mrs. Euston to life; and lady Honoria having left her in charge of her maid, hastened to the apartment of her mother, whom she found suffering more pain on account of Mrs. Euston than she did from her burnt hands; but being assured that she was alive, and had only been in a fainting fit, her ladyship observed, that the woman's fits were likely to prove expensive ones to her.—"There is my Brussels lace dress reduced to ashes," said she; "and my hands are so scorched, I shall not be able to feed myself for this month."

Lady Honoria expressed her sorrow for what had happened.

“ If you are really sorry,” said lady Eastbrook, “ you will cast that viper, Mrs. Euston, off directly.”

“ Your ladyship,” replied lady Honoria, “ is not aware of her situation—she is too ill to be moved, without endangering her life, and fixing on your character the stigma of inhumanity ; besides, I confess myself very sincerely attached to Mrs. Euston, and having no faults to lay to her charge, can by no means consent to her removal, which cannot be effected without prejudice to her interest, and infinite loss to me.”

“ I perceive,” said lady Eastbrook, “ that I am to meet opposition to all my wishes from my children. The situation of Mrs. Euston seems to excite great compassion in your bosom, while I meet but little concern, though I might have been burned to death through your obstinacy and disobedience ; and because I had not sufficient perplexities before upon my mind, on your account, I am now involved in another.”

Lady Honoria was at a loss to understand this new perplexity; but was spared conjecture by her ladyship proceeding to say—"The duke of Selkirk recommended his relation, this Mr. Norland, to my notice, as a husband for you."

"A husband for me!" exclaimed lady Honoria; "surely your ladyship can never intend to propose such a fright, such a piece of awkward formality?"

"He is the heir of a dukedom," said the countess, coldly, "and rank will ever obtain respect from reasonable people."

"I thought your ladyship had been more attached to family," said lady Honoria, "than to countenance the pretensions of a person whose paternal ancestors were all in trade."

"If you will give me the promise I required, respecting Horace Winterthorn," replied the countess, "I will write to the duke, and put an end to the affair."

"I am sorry it is not in my power to oblige you, madam," returned lady Honoria.

ria, " but my engagements with captain Winterthorn cannot be broke through."

" You are already married then !" exclaimed lady Eastbrook ; " the old sanctified hypocrite, his father, has dared to unite the daughter of a peer of the realm to his beggarly son ! But I will be the ruin of him—I will have his gown stripped off—I will have the marriage dissolved—I will make old Winterthorn an example of terror to all his cloth ! You will take it into recollection, also, that you are not of age, nor at liberty to contract marriage, without the concurrence of the guardians the earl your father nominated to the care of your person and fortune, among whom I am one ; and I will take care to punish the old fellow for aiding and abetting the ambitious designs of his son."

" How much," said lady Honoria, " you wrong the venerable pious Mr. Winterthorn ! He knows, and is too strict in the performance of his duties, to deserve your censure, or to fear your power."

" It is well for him that he does know

his duty," replied the countess—"I wish you were acquainted with yours; but whatever clergyman has dared to——"

"I am not married, madam, I assure you," said lady Honoria; "I have determined to defer the performance of that ceremony till the period arrives when the law will allow me permission to bestow my hand where my heart is already given."

"In this instance you have acted wisely," returned the countess; "and, perhaps, before that period arrives, you will be sensible of the folly and degradation of such a union—but I am weary of this contention, and shall be glad to lose my pains, fright, and vexation, in sleep."

Lady Honoria was not sorry to be dismissed, being very uneasy respecting Mrs. Euston, whom she found reclined, as she had left her, on the couch, and complaining much of her side, which she said was much bruised by her fall.

Lady Honoria related the conversation that had taken place in the apartment of

the countess ; and Mrs. Euston shed, or affected to shed, a torrent of tears at the thought of separating from her dear lady Honoria, the child of her affection.

Lady Honoria comforted and consoled her with the assurance that she would never withdraw her friendship and protection ; and if the countess insisted on her dismissal, she would take care to provide for her ease and comfort.

Mr. Norland being acquainted with the contents of the letter he had delivered from the duke of Selkirk to the countess of Eastbrook, considered it proper to inform her, that understanding lady Honoria was previously engaged, he respectfully took his leave, wishing her all possible happiness.

The countess employed her maid to write him a note, which merely conveyed an apology for not being able to see him before his departure from the castle, a promise to write to the duke of Selkirk as soon as she was able to hold a pen, and a

few cold compliments and good wishes to himself.

Mr. Norland now felt at liberty to declare himself to Alexina, of whom he solicited a few moments' private conversation. His billet was delivered in the presence of the countess of Deveron and lord Ellesmere.

Alexina had before acquainted the countess with the contents of the letter she had received from her mother, and she now placed Mr. Norland's billet in her hand, saying—"What shall I do, my dear madam?"

The countess having glanced her eye over the paper, replied—"Hear the gentleman, by all means, my dear; and who knows but he may thaw your icy heart, and persuade you to follow the advice of Mrs. Duncan, who so much wishes to see you a duchess?"

Alexina left the room; and lord Ellesmere, who was reading at a distant window, threw down the book, and with much emotion said—"Surely she will not,

cannot be so venal—she will not sacrifice herself to that pedantic fool, for the sake of being a duchess?”

“ Women have committed worse acts than marrying fools for the sake of aggrandizement,” replied the countess.

“ But will Alexina Duncan do this ?” resumed the earl ; “ will she, whose rejection of lord Eastbrook seemed the confirmation of a noble mind, above the base and sordid allurements of fortune, will she sacrifice her own happiness, and sink herself in the estimation of her friends ?”

“ But how can we tell, that in accepting the hand of Mr. Norland, she will sacrifice her own happiness ?” said the countess ; “ love may induce her to——”

“ Love !” interrupted lord Ellesmere—
“ love for Mr. Norland ! Pardon me, dear madam, but it is impossible for Alexina Duncan to love a man whose exterior has nothing to recommend it—a man who, speak the best you can of him, is but a learned ass ! No, no, Alexina Duncan cannot love him !”

“ It is not difficult, Algernon,” said the countess, “ to discover who loves Alexina Duncan—your emotion has betrayed your secret.”

“ Yes,” resumed lord Ellesmere, “ I confess I love this charming girl! but beautiful as her person is, it was her exalted mind that won my heart—it was her noble contempt of titled wealth. But if she has played the hypocrite—if she consents to be the wife of Norland, I shall despise and hate her.”

“ Alexina Duncan will not incur your contempt,” said the countess; “ from this trial she will come out brighter in virtue than before. But wherefore, Algernon, if thus sensible of her charms and virtues, conceal your passion? You have nothing to apprehend from the opposition of parents; and, from my knowledge of the disposition of Alexina, I am convinced she is worthy of your affection. Lord Ellesmere, I am persuaded, would not woo in vain.”

“ Of this,” replied he, “ I am not con-

vinced ; she has refused my cousin, whose person, title, and fortune, were worthy her acceptance. I have thought her heart already engaged ; and if she should refuse the hand of Norland, how shall I be certain this is not the case ? No, I will still conceal my passion, till some chance reveals to me the state of her mind—till by some fortunate circumstance I discover the possibility of winning her love.”

Alexina listened with patience to Mr. Norland’s wearying declaration of love, which was delivered in a speech composed of hard words, and far-fetched allusions ; which at length being ended, she modestly but decidedly refused the honour he had proposed her, alleging as a reason that she considered herself as yet too young to take upon herself the performance of those serious and important duties, which he had taken the trouble to point out as inseparable from a wedded life.

Having received the refusal of Alexina, at whose reply to his studied speech on

matrimonial duties he was much offended, he made his bow to lord Ellesmere, and, regretted by none, left the castle, and rode off to Hexham, where he called upon Mr. Duncan, and informed him of his ill success with Alexina.

The surgeon was neither displeased nor disappointed, for the affair had terminated exactly as he expected. Mr. Duncan knew that the heart of Alexina was not to be purchased; and as his intelligent eye measured the awkward dimensions of the figure before him, he was satisfied that, though the heir to a dukedom, he was by no means calculated to obtain the prize as a voluntary gift.

Mrs. Duncan was both displeased and disappointed at the little respect paid to her letter, and the girl's excessive folly, but still more at her husband's contented acquiescence with her refusal of such a grand offer. Yet all she could obtain from Mr. Duncan, by her discontented remarks, was a reply that provoked her still more.—“ I entirely approve,” said he, “ of

Alexina's decision—it is a confirmation, if such were wanted, of the soundness of her head, and the goodness of her heart—she has acted exactly as I wish, in refusing to share the dignities of a man she could not love.”

Mrs. Duncan knew from experience that remonstrance and expostulation were vain, for having once given an opinion, Alexander Duncan was never known to recede a tittle. She therefore was obliged to console herself by enveighing against the folly of her husband and daughter to Miss Frasier, who declared it was mighty odd conduct in them both, and enough to provoke the temper and patience of a saint.—“ Well, thank Heaven!” said Miss Frasier, “ I have neither husband nor children. The life of a maiden lady is called comfortless and solitary, and the wittings take delight in satirizing old maids; but this consolation attends a life of celibacy—if we have none to participate or increase our comforts, we have none to add to our discontents.”

On the following morning, at an early hour, Mr. Duncan, without informing his lady where he was going, set off to Ellesmere Castle, where he found Alexina, as he wished, alone. Unannounced, he entered the room where she sat employed at her pencil. In her haste to fly to his embrace, she threw down her portfolio, and in assisting her to replace its contents, Mr. Duncan beheld an unfinished portrait of lord Ellesmere. Without appearing to notice it, he placed it on the table, and after some general inquiries respecting her own health and that of the family, he asked what subject she had been employing her pencil on?

Alexina replied, she had just finished a drawing of a little romantic spot to the left of the castle, with which she had been particularly delighted.—“It is a hollow glen,” said she, “shadowed by two fantastic rocks, and watered by a narrow limpid stream that trickles from the summit of one of the rocks. I will shew it you.”

On moving the drawing, the portrait of

lord Ellesmere again fell to the ground, and Mr. Duncan, on raising it, beheld the trace of tears on the ivory paper.—“ This, I fancy,” said he, “ has been your morning’s employment, and not considering the likeness correct, you have wept for vexation.”—Alexina blushed deeply, while Mr. Duncan, taking her hand, said—“ Either you, I fear, have not resorted to my talisman as often as you ought, or it has not possessed the power I boasted—else why those tears?” pointing to the picture, “ or why that conscious blush?”

Alexina smiled—“ Is it not possible,” said she, “ to shed tears from any other cause than the consciousness of having admitted an interdicted passion? Cannot my dear father believe, that having declined the offer of Mr. Norland, when sanctioned by his concurrence, would occasion me to weep, and regret that my heart then refused to ratify his wishes?”

“ I can believe any thing,” said Mr. Duncan, “ rather than that you will act

imprudently." Alexina stifled a sigh, while he continued—"Come, I will go with you to the glen you just now mentioned; a walk will be of service to us both, and by the time we return, the countess of Deveron will have risen."

The air, though frosty, was clear, and the sun cast a red lustre on the trees, whose fallen leaves were whirled before them, or lay in heaps—the monuments of departed autumn. The situation of the castle and its highly-cultivated lands were commended by Alexina, who, dreading any further question respecting lord Ellesmere's portrait, was anxious to divert Mr. Duncan's thoughts from the subject; but it was to inquire into the state of her heart he came, and having assented to her opinions on the surrounding scenery, he spoke of her rejection of Mr. Norland—"Not," said Mr. Duncan, "that I am at all displeased, my dear Alexina, but only wonder that your vanity could resist the near prospect of being a duchess."

"I am more proud of being called your

daughter," said Alexina, "than I should be of the high-sounding title of duchess of Selkirk. Remember, my dear sir, that I have always lived under your eye—that I am your pupil; and basely should I have thrown your instruction away, could I have married merely through ambition and vanity; for in Mr. Norland there is nothing to love or admire—his manners are cold and formal, his learning absolute pedantry, his figure destitute of grace."

"But for all this, his disposition may be amiable," said Mr. Duncan, "he may have a good heart."

"He is insufferably proud," replied Alexina, "and that does not argue a good heart. His coarse red hair gives additional vulgarity to his features, naturally disagreeable; then those ugly curves and angles in his face indicate, according to Lavater——"

Mr. Duncan laughed.—"The countenance of Mr. Norland, I confess, my dear Alexina," said he, "is not much in his favour; but do not let this prejudice you

against him. Be assured that Lavater, like ourselves, was fallible; and the pages he has written on lines, curves, and angles, ought not to be considered demonstrative either of a good or evil disposition. You cannot have forgot with what delight we used to gaze on the snowy forehead and serpentine lip of Matilda Howard, and how often we have said her innocent countenance and dimpled smiles were the transcripts of an artless ingenuous mind: her conduct in wedded life has proved the erroneous judgment that is formed on the shape of a face, or its expression."

Alexina would have spoken in defence of Lavater's system of physiognomy, but Mr. Duncan affectionately pressing her hand, continued—"Advantageous as a marriage with Mr. Norland appears, as far as relates to your elevation in rank, be assured it would never have my approbation, unless your heart went with your hand. You will have wealth enough for happiness, and Heaven forbid that I should ever see my Alexina a sacrifice to

vanity and ambition! But while I say this, I would wish you not to consider Mr. Norland's features, but his mind—note his actions, not his looks, which will be observing a conduct more liberal and rational, than deciding his character by a system founded in wild chimera, and instigated, perhaps, by a splenetic imagination."

"Allowing your observations on the system of Lavater to be just," said Alexina, "and though it is possible that Mr. Norland may possess a good heart, yet, my dear sir, his manners are so forbidding, and his person so disagreeable, that it is utterly impossible he should ever effect a change in my present sentiments towards him."

"In the choice of a husband, my dear child," replied Mr. Duncan, "you will not, I trust, suffer your eye to mislead your heart. Personal beauty may certainly be desirable; but remember, my love, on the qualities of a man's mind, not on the

graces of his exterior, a wife must depend for happiness."

They had now reached the glen, and Mr. Duncan stopped to admire its beauties, which, even at that advanced season, he confessed were worthy the pencil of the artist. As they advanced beneath the rocks towards the middle of the glen, to their astonishment they beheld the earl of Deveron seated on the root of a tree, his hands folded on his breast, his eyes fixed on the narrow stream that murmured at his feet. The earl was so deeply buried in thought, that he was unconscious of the approach of Mr. Duncan and Alexina, and started like one awakened from a dream of horror when they spoke to him.—“Though I am in general an advocate for early rising,” said Mr. Duncan, “I must take the liberty of blaming your lordship’s appearance here; the season too closely approximates to winter—the air is too sharp for an invalid to indulge in morning walks.”

“You are right, Duncan,” said the earl,

with a faint smile, "but I felt feverish, and——"

"One would suppose your lordship wished for an ague," replied Mr. Duncan, "by your seating yourself on the damp earth."

"I would I were at rest beneath it!" said the earl, with a look of anguish, that affected Alexina even to tears.

But suppressing the rising emotion, she endeavoured to cheer his spirits, and turn his thoughts into a brighter channel, by speaking of the very great improvements lord Ellesmere had already made on the domain.

"I shall never be well while I remain here," said the earl; "and only the dread of giving pain to Algernon, who fancies the air of Northumberland will restore me to health, prevents my quitting it immediately. But come, let us return to the castle," continued he; "it is near the breakfast hour, and Constance will be alarmed when she finds I am not in my chamber."

At the entrance of the glen they were

met by the earl's faithful Swiss, who had been sent by the countess in search of his lord, whose absence had indeed occasioned alarm; for though he enjoyed not her affection, her duty as a wife made her solicitous for his safety; and there were periods in which she feared the melancholy that preyed upon his mind would prompt him to the commission of suicide.

On the lawn they met the countess, who expressed much pleasure on perceiving who were the companions of the earl in his morning ramble; for she knew not that he had left the castle before Alexina had quitted her bed, or Mr. Duncan had arrived. With her accustomed grace and sweetness, she bade him welcome, and led the way to the breakfast-parlour.

Alexina presided, and was pouring cream into the earl's coffee, when his eye rested on the talismanic ring: the rapid changes of his countenance from pale to red, and from red to ashy paleness, did not escape the observance of Mr. Duncan: Letting fall the coffee cup, which he was

holding for the cream, he seized the hand of the terrified Alexina, and in a voice almost choked with agitation, demanded—"Whence came it—of whom had you that ring?"

Alexina's eyes turned with an expression of fear and astonishment on her father, who calmly said—"Be not alarmed, my love: the earl knows, no doubt——"

"Yes," interrupted lord Deveron, "yes, I know the ring."

Alexina drew it from her finger.

"Alas!" said the countess, looking on it, and bursting into an agony of tears—"alas! I know it too—that ring once belonged to lord Roslyn."

"You are right, Constance," resumed the earl; "that ring was indeed the property of lord Roslyn; he gave it me—it was his parting gift. I wore it constantly, but it is long since I have seen it; and how Miss Duncan should have become possessed of it appears most strange and mysterious."

"A few words, my lord," said Mr. Duncan, "will explain the mystery—I gave it to her."

The earl did not appear to listen to Mr. Duncan—he seemed lost in the recollection of former times, and at last muttered—"About eighteen years ago I lost the ring."

"In the forest of Mar," said Mr. Duncan.

The earl seized his arm, and with quivering lips asked—"How know you where I lost it—who told you that?"

"Compose yourself, my lord," resumed Mr. Duncan, gently releasing himself from his convulsive grasp: "in the forest of Mar I found that ring; I discovered it, by the glare of lightning, lying at the root of a tree, to which a gust of wind had carried my hat, after I had been forced to receive a basket."

The earl fell with a deep groan to the earth. Alexina and the countess assisted to raise him, and by the order of Mr. Duncan he was carried to his chamber, whither

the surgeon attended him; and having administered to him a composing draught, he returned to the breakfast-parlour, where he found Alexina bathing the temples of the countess. Having in some measure recovered composure, she spoke of the strange agitation experienced by the earl whenever the forest of Mar was mentioned.

“That forest,” said Alexina, “appears to be the scene of curious adventures. I think, my dear father, you told the earl you found his ring after having been compelled to receive a basket?”

“I did,” returned Mr. Duncan; “but having told you that basket contained a treasure, you must question me no farther—the adventures of that night I am not at present at liberty to disclose.”

Alexina’s curiosity respecting the forest of Mar was trifling compared to what the countess felt; but the reply of Mr. Duncan placed a seal upon her lips, and she forebore all questions.

“I recommend an airing this fine morn-

ing," said Mr. Duncan: "shall I order your ladyship's carriage?"

The countess having expressed assent, Mr. Duncan rung the bell. The countess pressed the well-remembered ring to her lips, and placing it on the finger of Alexina, insisted on her wearing it.—"Keep it, my love," said she, "for my sake, and for the sake of him whom your eyes and voice perpetually remind me of—my ever-lamented Roslyn, the husband of my youth."

Mr. Duncan having placed the ladies in the carriage, returned to the chamber of the earl of Deveron, whom he found busily turning over the papers in his writing-desk.

Having closed the desk, he addressed Mr. Duncan in a voice of composure—"You have many times," said he, "spoken of an adventure that befell you in the forest of Mar. I am not actuated by an idle curiosity, but reasons of a very important nature urge me to request that you will oblige me with a full account of the circumstances to which you have alluded;

and if you can remember the day of the month, and the year, it will greatly add to my satisfaction."

Mr. Duncan, without hesitation, told a round unvarnished tale, that seemed to affect and agitate his hearer with a variety of emotions; but though Mr. Duncan positively said, "and you are the man with whom I conversed on that memorable night," the earl neither denied nor confirmed his assertion; neither did he, when Mr. Duncan had concluded, enter on the explanation which the surgeon expected; he merely exclaimed—"This exceeds belief—this is indeed passing strange!"

"Of the truth of every syllable I have advanced," said Mr. Duncan, "I am ready at any moment to make oath."

"It is not required—it is not necessary," replied the earl; then, after a moment's pause, he added—"Your wife and Miss Duncan are doubtless acquainted with these mysterious circumstances?"

Mr. Duncan's reply was a negative.

"You will oblige me infinitely," re-

sumed the earl, "by still preserving this secret. Doubtless you will expect my reasons for having requested this disclosure, and my wish that you should observe silence with every other person on the subject; but as yet I must not—cannot enter on my own condemnation. Oh, Duncan! Duncan! could you see what passes in my heart, even you, severe as you are in virtue, you would pity me. To-morrow morning I shall set off for Scotland, whither I go to make atonement, if possible, for the crimes of love and ambition—at my return all shall be explained. I would you could be my companion and my counsellor in this intricate business; but as this cannot be, I shall take with me only my faithful Swiss. To the Wangle I bend my course, for in the forest of Mar I expect to meet a solution of the mystery which, at this moment, confounds my reason."

On the return of the ladies from their ride, the countess was informed of the earl's intended journey to Scotland; and being assured by Mr. Duncan, that travelling

would be of service, rather than injury, to his health, she offered to accompany her lord ; but this proof of attention the earl peremptorily declined, well knowing that Deveron Castle would renew all the sorrows that time and resignation had lulled.

The following morning, as his travelling chaise passed through Hexham, the earl of Deveron stopped at the door of Mr. Duncan, when having received the medicines necessary to his health, he wrung his hand, and in tones of strong emotion, said—
“ Farewell, Duncan ! keep the secret inviolate, and pray for my success ! ”

CHAPTER II.

And oh! said the knight, since to-morrow I go,
To fight in a far distant land,

Your tears for my absence soon ceasing to flow,

Another shall woo you; and you will bestow

On a wealthier suitor your hand.

LEWIS.

.....
"Love, farewell! though doomed to part,

Distance cannot sever:

In thy bosom dwells my heart,

And there shall dwell for ever."

THE French education of Miss Nelthorpe had taught her to make the very most of her person; it had also instructed her to trifle agreeably, and to affect feelings to which she was in reality a stranger; she could also flatter with an air of such sincerity, and assume such an appearance of tenderness, that lord Eastbrook, completely duped by her arts, became in reality attached to her. Most of his time, to the great disp'easure of his mother, was spent

at Aynhoe Lodge, or in riding about the country with Miss Nelthorpe, who laboured with all her skill to persuade him to give up his commission. But though she wept, and represented all the dangers to which he would be exposed with the army, and protested again and again that she could not survive his loss, she could not prevail on him, infatuated as he was, to remain in England and make her a countess; for though in dress and manners he appeared a coxcomb, lord Eastbrook possessed courage, and a proper sense of honour, which would not permit him to disgrace himself in the eyes of the brave men who expected him to lead them to the field, whose judgment would pronounce him a rank coward, should he, at the moment when he was expected to fight the battles of his country, resign his commission.

All therefore that Miss Nelthorpe could obtain was a vow of everlasting love, and a promise to make her a countess as soon as he returned to England; but too

cunning to rely on verbal promises, knowing that words were but wind, and lover's vows even more empty, if possible, than air, she artfully contrived to get from him a written promise, to bestow upon her the title of countess of Eastbrook, at the end of the campaign.

In the meantime, sir Christopher Nelthorpe, though much occupied in field-sports, did not forget the charms of the little fairy, lady Honoria, and perceiving the ascendancy his sister had obtained over the young peer, he resolutely determined to make an attack upon her heart without delay. To this intent, he took more than ordinary pains to humanize his unwieldy person; and having ordered his carriage to Ellesmere Castle, demanded an audience of lady Honoria Egerton, to whom, without much waste of words, or ceremonious preface, he made known the purport of his visit—laying his broad red hand on his wide spread chest, he protested that the very first sight of her had won his heart.

“ Pray, sir Christopher,” said lady Honoria, “ when might that be?—was it the day you did lord Ellesmere’s wine so much honour ?”

The deep ruby hue of sir Christopher’s face would not suffer his blushes to be seen, if he really did blush ; it was certain, however, that he felt a little ashamed, by his attempting an apology. He declared he did not know how he came to be so overtaken, unless indeed he took a glass or two more than ordinary, with the hope of rendering himself agreeable to her.

“ A most effectual way most certainly,” returned lady Honoria, “ to recommend yourself to the favour of a woman of delicacy ! But, sir Christopher, I am not at present inclined to alter my condition.”

“ So all young ladies of your age say,” replied sir Christopher ; “ but I beg leave to observe to your ladyship, that my family is one of the most ancient in Northumberland, and my property——”

Lady Honoria tried to look disdainful, but the grotesque figure of the fat knight

was too much for gravity, and she laughed in spite of the efforts she made to restrain her risibility.

Sir Christopher had a good mind to feel offended; but remembering that anger would not at all increase his agreeable *agremens*, he constrained his temper, and said—"I am glad to see you so merry, lady Honoria."

"Merry!" repeated she; "I never in my life was less inclined to mirth, but you are so irresistibly droll! I beg your pardon though, sir Christopher."

"There is no occasion for an apology," said the knight; "I make everybody laugh—no such thing as being dull in my company. But as I was saying, lady Honoria, my family and my fortune——"

"Can never be any thing to me," replied lady Honoria. "I thank you, sir Christopher, for the immense honour you designed me; but if you could date your family as far back as Noah, and was your wealth as unbounded as that of Croesus, I could not possibly accept your hand."

Sir Christopher looked astonished.—“No! not accept my hand!” said he, in a tone of mingled surprise and disappointment; “why, I will lay any man a hundred pounds, that I can find fifty women in this county who would jump at the offer.”

“Very possible,” returned lady Honoria; “but as I before said, I am not disposed to change my condition: and now, sir Christopher, having given you my decided reply, permit me to inquire after the health of Miss Nelthorpe?”

“She is quite well, I believe,” said the knight, “for I heard her singing some outlandish stuff with lord Eastbrook, when I left Aynhoe Lodge. Your brother, lady Honoria, is sensible of the merits of Clara Nelthorpe, though her brother is despised by you.”

Before lady Honoria could reply to this speech, the countess of Eastbrook and lord Ellesmere entered the room, from a conservatory that opened on the lawn. Lord Ellesmere had no wish to cultivate the

acquaintance of sir Christopher Nelthorpe, whose manners, at their first meeting, had completely disgusted him ; but in his own house he was compelled to behave to him with politeness.

The countess of Eastbrook, under no such restraint, was more stately and distant than ever ; but the assurance of sir Christopher was proof against a frigid air and reserved manners, and without the least hesitation or ceremony, he informed lady Eastbrook of the purport of his visit, and the settlements he was willing to make on lady Honoria ; adding to this, a long account of his family, with their marriages and intermarriages ; and concluded his long speech with offering to send his rent-roll for her ladyship's inspection : for though he confessed he had been a little wild among the women, he had not at all injured his property ; and as for gambling, he had never touched a dice-box since he was quite a green-horn, and then the loss of a few hundred pounds cured him.

Sir Christopher paused at length for

want of breath; and lady Eastbrook, with much contempt, told him, that whether he was a man of gallantry, or a gamester, in no way concerned her, to whom his character, good or bad, was of no sort of consequence.

Sir Christopher stared.—“What!” said he, “is it of no consequence to your ladyship, that the husband of your daughter should be a man of good moral character?”

“I do not see,” replied lady Eastbrook, “that such an inference can possibly be drawn from my declaring myself utterly unconcerned, sir Christopher, respecting your character.”

This was too plain to be at all misunderstood, and the knight began to suspect that nothing under the rank of an earl would be acceptable to the pride of the stately countess; but determined to have a positive refusal, he replied—“I am to understand then that your ladyship rejects my suit.”

“Your understanding in this instance

is perfectly clear," said lady Eastbrook: "the person who, with my consent, obtains the hand of lady Honoria Egerton, must rank higher than a Northumbrian baronet."

Sir Christopher could not reply to a countess in the way he wished, but rising hastily, he replied—"Perhaps your ladyship will not be pleased to hear that your son intends to make my sister countess of Eastbrook?"

"Like it! like such a match!" exclaimed the countess—"But it can never be—the boy cannot be such a fool—No, Heaven forbid!"

Sir Christopher, with a malicious smile, replied, he was very sorry the match did not meet her ladyship's approbation; but as the earl was of age, her forbidding the marriage would be of little consequence.

Lady Honoria and lord Ellesmere, during this conversation, had entered the conservatory, and were talking of the separation that, in three days more, would take

place between her and Horace Winterthorn, from whence the loud tones of the countess, calling sir Christopher an insolent bumpkin, drew lord Ellesmere back to the apartment, just time enough to see sir Christopher snatching his hat from a marble slab.

“What is the matter, madam?” inquired lord Ellesmere.

“The matter!” replied she; “my family are for ever furnishing me with matter for vexation. That man,” pointing to sir Christopher, who was drawing on his gloves—“that man has the effrontery to tell me that my son, the earl of Eastbrook, is actually about to degrade us all by a marriage with his sister.”

“Truly, my lady,” said sir Christopher, “I should pity the girl for matching herself with your son, if I did not know she has a spirit equal to your own. Good-morning, my lord. This is the first time in my life I was ever so insulted.”

Lord Ellesmere saw sir Christopher en-

ter his carriage—made an endeavour to qualify the expressions of the countess; but the knight, swearing a great oath, declared she was prouder than the devil, but he would have her to know, he thought as much of his family as she did of hers.

The countess of Deveron and lord Ellesmere were lost in conjectures respecting the cause of the earl of Deveron having set off so suddenly for Scotland, and without suffering any person to accompany him except his Swiss valet. They had both wondered at the horror he evinced at the sight of the ring on Alexina's finger; but each was too delicate to hint at the subject in the presence of the other. Lord Ellesmere never having lived with his father, had but lately become acquainted that some mental cause preyed upon his health—he saw, with infinite affliction, that remorse rendered his life almost insupportable, but at the cause of that remorse he had not the remotest guess. He knew, indeed, that the earl his father, when

comparatively poor, had married his mother, who was neither young nor handsome, to enrich himself; but as this was a practice so common in the world, he could not believe that his conscience was troublesome on that account: he knew also, that after her death, he had married the lady who report said was his first and only love; and when he contemplated the beautiful person of Constance, and remembered her virtues and elegant accomplishments, he more than ever wondered at the misery depicted on the countenance of the earl of Deveron, and evinced in all his words and actions. But while lord Ellesmere was bewildered in conjecture, the countess of Deveron had suspicions terrible to her imagination. She believed that Leolin still lived, but by some villany, some horrible guilt on the part of Archibald Bruce, was defrauded of his rights, and compelled to conceal himself from her, who had been also made the victim of successful art and treachery.

The affront sir Christopher Nelthorpe had received from the rejection of lady Honoria, and the insolent pride of her mother, he communicated to Miss Nelthorpe on his return to Aynhoe Lodge, where he gave vent to the fury he had with difficulty restrained at Ellesmere Castle, and with deadly imprecations swore he would so humble the pride of the countess, that he would make her solicit him to marry the little pert baggage, who had ridiculed his pretensions, and impertinently laughed in his face.

Miss Nelthorpe was sensible that her brother's person and manners were very much against him, in the character of a lover to a young lady of the first rank, who had been accustomed to adoration from handsome elegant young men of fashion; but she soothed his rage so successfully, that he promised not to set aside her expected elevation, by expressing his resentment to lord Eastbrook, who would, it was natural to suppose, take part with his mother and sister.

The countess of Eastbrook having determined to set out for town with her son, bade lady Honoria prepare to quit Northumberland.—“I long,” said she, “to get back to London—these dismal old castles vapour me to death.”

“I was in hopes we should have remained here all the winter,” said lady Honoria, who had calculated on spending a large portion of her time with the worthy rector; “I am quite delighted with the castle and its situation.”

“The country is detestable to me always,” resumed the countess; “and I most sincerely wish I had never gone into Oxfordshire, for there you took it into your head to fall in love. Old castles, and groves and woods, are, I have heard, the proper scenes for the heroine of a romance to move in; but the daughter of the earl of Eastbrook will cut a better figure in the metropolis, where persons of rank and fashion are more regardful of their consequence in life, and have more wisdom than to fall in love with, or give encourage-

ment to, an absurd and ridiculous partiality for handsome beggars. However, having removed you from the infectious influence of shady groves, purling streams, and ruined towers, I trust, lady Honoria, I shall not be compelled to renew this most hateful subject again, or to tell you, that if you contract a marriage beneath yourself, I shall consider you an alien to my blood."

Lady Honoria made no reply, and the countess inquired after Mrs. Euston, whether she would be able to travel with them—"But if not," continued she, "lord Ellesmere will allow her the range of the castle, till her delicate nerves are sufficiently strong to bear the motion of a chaise."

"Mrs. Euston, I trust, will be able to depart when we do," said lady Honoria; "I am happy to say she is much better, though she has suffered severely."

"You will be pleased to remember," replied lady Eastbrook, "the cause of her sufferings; and while you exhibit so much tender compassion for that weak silly wo-

man, it would appear quite as decorous if you were to display at the same time a little respectful sorrow for my scorched fingers."

"You know very little of my heart, madam," returned lady Honoria, "if you suppose I do not feel infinite concern—"

"Let your concern appear in your actions," replied the countess, "and all will be well. There is a ball at Hexham to-morrow night; I understand the countess of Deveron and lord Ellesmere will honour it with their presence: the state of my hands will prevent my dressing, nor indeed do I feel the least inclined to mix with the vulgar inhabitants of a country-town, among whom the vicar, the doctor, and the lawyer, are the great dons, who, inflated with their ideal consequence, fancy themselves company for persons of the first rank. But I trust, lady Honoria, if you go to this ball, that you will not degrade yourself by dancing with any of the Hexham gentry."

When lady Eastbrook gave this injunc-

tion, it never once occurred to her that Horace Winterthorn did not live in the town of Hexham, whom she most of all designed to include in her prohibition; but lady Honoria, aware of the circumstance, made no hesitation to promise she would not dance with any of the Hexham gentlemen.

Lady Deveron having hoped, and anxiously wished for the appearance of Leolin, whom the earl persisted in saying he had seen under the arch of St. Hildebert's, (finding that day after day passed without bringing to pass this expected, though dreaded event—dreaded, because the confirmation of his existence must prove her an adultress, though innocent of intended guilt), could not bring herself to quit Northumberland without paying another visit to the ruined abbey, every part of which she determined to explore, yet clinging to the hope that some circumstance might there arise to confirm her suspicion that the husband of her heart still lived, or that she might be convinced that she had be-

held his spirit—an idea to which her well-instructed mind refused belief. Every hour's reflection sunk the impression deeper on her heart, that the change in the person and manners of Archibald Bruce, the dreadful malady of mind under which he laboured, were the terrible consequences of some secret guilt, some by her unfathomable treachery to lord Roslyn; and with this suspected treachery she could not help connecting his present journey to Scotland, undertaken at the near approach of winter, with no other companion than his Swiss valet, her own attendance and that of lord Ellesmere having been rejected.

The countess of Deveron, though she delighted not in crowded assemblies or the public ball, yet made it a point to visit every place of entertainment, where her restless eyes wandered among the gay groups marshalled under the banner of pleasure, in search of an object, which, if found, she was certain would only add to

the misery of her present feelings. But to be resolved—to gain a terrible conviction, was what she wished, that she might be able to render to the world a sufficient reason for quitting it, and burying herself in the depths of that solitude for which her sick mind languished. To further the accomplishment of this wild project, she at once announced her intention of acting as chaperon to Miss Duncan and lady Honoria at the Hexham ball—a circumstance that quite reconciled lady Eastbrook to remaining at home, as she was satisfied that under her care the giddy lady Honoria would be restrained from forming an acquaintance with, or suffering any familiarity from, the Hexham gentry.

The countess of Deveron having mentioned to Alexina her wish to visit the venerable ruin of St. Hildebert, without inviting lady Eastbrook to be of their party, she having no taste for fallen grandeur, and experiencing more pleasure in viewing the decorated walls of a modern mansion, than wandering in dilapidated

cloisters, or musing under time-demolished arches, though their antiquity could be traced as far back as she proudly followed her own illustrious genealogy.

On their way to St. Hildebert's, the countess asked Alexina if she could bear to part with her Northumbrian friends for a few months, as she had resolved to quit Ellesmere Castle at the same time with lady Eastbrook, and if perfectly agreeable to herself, had determined to take her to London for the winter?

The reply of Alexina was an assent to lady Deveron's invitation, if the permission of her parents allowed her to avail herself of the honour.

The countess spoke of lord Eastbrook's apparent attachment to Miss Nelthorpe, which so entirely occupied his time as scarcely afforded him leisure to pay his respects to his own family once in twenty-four hours.—“I lament,” said the countess, “his silly infatuation, but as the moment of separation is so near at hand, I trust that absence will effect what the

violence of his mother will never bring about. And as to the lady, I have no doubt but a new lover will drive lord Eastbrook entirely out of her head ; for as to her heart, I confess it is my belief, that is perfectly at ease ; and whether he dies an honourable death in the field of battle, or returns a conquering hero, will be perfectly indifferent to her, if, during his absence, she can secure to herself a husband of equal rank and equal fortune."

Alexina's mind assented to the estimate lady Deveron made of Miss Nelthorpe's feelings and principles.

As the carriage of the countess stopped before the entrance of the abbey, she observed at a distance Horace Winterthorn and a stranger—their backs were towards her, but the sound of wheels made them suddenly turn—Horace Winterthorn politely bowed, but the stranger hastily pursued his way.

Alexina smilingly returned the salute of her early friend ; but the eye of the countess strained after the stranger, and

when she could no longer see him, she sunk back in the carriage, and burst into tears. But a moment before Alexina had seen her smile, and though her smiles were always pensive, yet they were inexpressibly sweet, and the grief and wildness that now convulsed her beautiful features filled her with alarm. In a voice of terror, she inquired if she was ill? but it was some moments before the countess could reply to her often-repeated "For Heaven's sake! my dear madam, what is the matter?"

At length the countess pressed the hand which held hers, and faintly said—"Be not alarmed, my dear Alexina—I am much better. Tell me, my love, do you know the gentleman whom we just now saw with captain Winterthorn?"

"I really cannot be certain," said Alexina; "yet I think it was a Mr. Mountfort—but those great-coats so much disguise the figure."

"The height—the figure so much resembled his," interrupted the countess.

"Of whom, madam, do you speak?" asked Alexina.

“Of whom, Alexina!” returned the countess; “of him whose image never quits my mind, of lord Roslyn. Oh! would that this uncertainty was at an end! that I might know the worst that could befall me!”

Alexina was amazed at the agitation and expressions of the countess; but too respectful to indulge a curiosity that she feared might give pain, she remained silent.

After a few moments' pause, the countess appeared calm, and quitting the carriage, she took the arm of Alexina, and passed beneath the ruined archway into what had formerly been the cloisters, of which the small part that remained standing demonstrated, in the rich carving that was yet discoverable through moss and ivy, its ancient grandeur. A part of the chapel yet remained entire; and as the countess leaned on the mouldering altar, she cast a mournful look towards the time-demolished gallery, from whence the voices of the nuns had once rendered more sweet

and impressive the solemn notes of the full-toned organ, and with soothing power had calmed the agonies of grief, elevating thought from earth to heaven.

“How many breaking hearts,” said the countess, “have knelt at this altar—sunk in hopeless sorrow, torn from all that rendered life desirable! what oceans of tears have washed the marble!”

“And here,” said Alexina, “here also has the prayer of hope been poured—the pious aspiration of praise and gratitude been breathed!”

“True, most true,” replied the countess, mournfully: “all are not wretches destitute of hope—all do not find their lives a joyless blank!”

As she spoke, a sigh seemed to be breathed by some one behind her—the countess started and looked back, but no person was visible except Alexina, who was collecting from the pavement some pieces of exquisitely-painted glass, that had been shattered by the wind from a beautiful Gothic window.

“ I will visit the tower, my love,” said the countess, “ from which, when we were last here, I was deterred by the fears of lady Eastbrook.”

“ There is nothing to apprehend, I believe,” replied Alexina, “ for the tower has suffered less from the desolating hand of time than any other part of the abbey, and the prospects from the windows are grand and extensive.”

Having climbed the winding stairs, they entered a chamber in which there appeared evident signs of recent inhabitation. On the hearth the embers were yet glowing, and on a rude table stood a basket containing provisions.

“ We are intruders,” said the countess; “ this chamber has a tenant.”

The sound of feet was now heard ascending the stairs. Alexina wished for male protection, for recollecting what she had heard respecting lights being seen in the abbey at night, she feared the chambers of the tower were inhabited by wandering gipsies, or other lawless depredators,

who might cause them to repent the temerity of having ventured there unattended. The eyes of the countess were fixed on the entrance, but the expression of her countenance was not fear. In the next moment a dark-looking elderly man entered the chamber; but seeing strangers, he seemed surprised, bowed respectfully, and apologizing in a foreign accent for his intrusion, hastily retreated down the stairs.

The stranger's dress, above the vulgar, relieved the apprehensions of Alexina; but the countess sighing heavily, said—"Thus ever am I the sport of disappointment."

They now wandered to the next chamber, which, to the surprise of Alexina, was decently furnished, and contained a couch for repose. On a chair near the entrance lay a book—it was Zimmermann on Solitude, and on a blank leaf was written—

"The wretch ordain'd within his breast to bear
The sharpest arrow of relentless woe,
His hours in solitude away may wear,
For what, alas! can crowds on him bestow?"

114 SECRETS IN EVERY MANSION.

“ Each smiling face would seem to mock his pain,
Each voice of mirth increase his cureless grief;
Welcome, lone solitude ! thy silent reign
Affords the wounded heart a faint relief.

“ For while no sound obtrudes upon the ear,
Save mystic whisp’rings of the winds of night,
The forms that weeping memory holds most dear
Then smiling come to bless his mental sight.

“ While such fair visions charm the aching heart,
While fond idea clasps the lovely spell,
Who from the lonely wilderness would part—
Who, solitude ! would quit thy hermit cell ?”

The tears of the countess dropped on the book. Alexina had moved to the window, from whence she again beheld the stranger, at the sight of whom lady Deveron had expressed so much agitation : he was now seated on a broken pillar, and she had a full view of his face, which appeared remarkable only for its paleness and melancholy ; his figure also was very thin, and while Alexina hesitated whether she ought to point him out to the countess, she thought, were she to meet him at the hour of night, in the precincts of the abbey, she should indeed believe him

to be one of those shadowy forms that visit "the glimpses of the moon, making night horrible." But seeing the countess now moving towards her, she said she thought the gentleman whom they had seen with captain Winterthorn was now on the terrace, beneath the window.

Constance darted forward—but he had changed his posture, and his back was turned towards them.

"Let us instantly descend," said the countess; "this appears to be the moment in which the happiness or misery of my remaining days must be decided; hasten, dear Alexina, to the terrace—let me obtain conviction!"

Descending from the tower, they crossed the interior of the abbey, with as much expedition as the rubbish, which in many places obstructed their way, would permit; but when, faint and almost breathless, they reached the yet remaining colonnade, which opened on the terrace, the stranger had disappeared.

The countess sunk on the supporting

arm of Alexina, whose smelling-bottle was of service in recalling the fleeting senses of lady Deveron, who having again wept bitterly, said—"Alas! this fatal mystery will never be unravelled! Sweet Alexina, gentle, compassionate maid, forgive me for thus agitating your spirits—for thus fatiguing you."

The reply of Alexina was full of kindness, of pity, and respect; but fearing the damps arising from mouldering walls and moss-covered fragments would be prejudicial to the countess, she warned her of the time they had been absent from the castle.

Lady Deveron suffered Alexina to lead her to the carriage, where she remained for some moments buried in thought; at length, pressing her lips to the white forehead of Alexina, she said—"No doubt, my sweet girl, you will wonder at the strangeness of my conduct. You may, and with reason too, judging only by the wildness of my actions, accuse me of impropriety, in thus anxiously seeking after a stranger; but Heaven can witness for me

my motive was pure—I seek not to engage in guilt, but to escape it. That stranger—but no, it must not be! I am a wife, and rigid duty places a seal upon my lips—No, no, silence and submission must be mine! I dare not, must not say what passes in my thoughts; yet, Alexina, I conjure you, think not lightly of me, while I own that I would give the whole of my possessions, could I but see that stranger face to face—if I could hear him speak; for then concealment would be needless, and no suspicion of unworthiness would sully my fair fame.”

“Dearest lady,” replied Alexina, pressing the trembling hand of the countess to her lips, “dearest lady, my thoughts presume not to arraign your conduct; I do believe you have some weighty reason for your actions—some secret sorrow, which would that I could cure!”

“I would that I might speak it!” said the countess. “I thank you, Alexina, for the justice of your thoughts, and do entreat you, by that regard which you pro-

fess to feel for me, speak not of the occurrences of this morning—Nay, pardon me,” seeing Alexina about to speak, “I feel that I have given a needless caution.”

Lord Ellesmere had designed to remain the winter in Northumberland, but understanding that Miss Duncan was to spend some months with the countess of Deveron in London, and must probably remain with her till the following spring, he could no longer endure the idea of the country; the jealousy of love suggested that her beauty would draw round her a crowd of admirers—some one less diffident than himself might prove a successful lover, and he might shortly be deprived of the blessing he so much desired.—“I will spend the winter under the same roof with her,” said lord Ellesmere; “I will, if possible, be the envied possessor of the *Rose of Hexham!*” He then rang the bell, and gave his valet orders to be ready to set off for town the following morning.

After partaking of an early dinner, the countess of Deveron and Alexina in the

first carriage, and lady Honoria Egerton and Mrs. Euston in the second, arrived at Mr. Duncan's to dress for the ball, to the great satisfaction of Mrs. Duncan, who knew all her dear friends would be ready to expire with envy to see her at the ball in the same party with two ladies of high rank and title.

The toilet of lady Deveron was soon concluded, and she hastened to the drawing-room, to prefer her request of taking Alexina to London with her.

Mr. Duncan was not without his suspicions respecting the state of Alexina's feelings towards lord Ellesmere, and as he had been taught to believe that his lordship would remain during the winter in Northumberland, where he was making various improvements on his domain, he at once acceded to the proposal of lady Deveron, considering that a few months' residence in town, under the immediate protection of a person of such exalted character, would, in many respects, be highly advantageous to Alexina.

Mrs. Duncan too approved of Alexina's accepting the invitation of the countess, considering that she should, for some time at least, get rid of a person whose presence always brought with it unpleasant reflections and jealous feelings; for that Alexander Duncan loved his daughter better than he did his wife, she was perfectly convinced; and, besides, there was no knowing but the countess might invite her also to stay a few weeks in London.

The mind of Alexina, during this day, had suffered much. In accepting the honour proposed her by lady Deveron, she felt the anguish of a separation from two objects most tenderly beloved, her father and lord Ellesmere: with the former she knew she should correspond, and should constantly receive his precepts and his blessing, but of lord Ellesmere she should only hear through the medium of others. The reflection cost Alexina a few tears, but hers was a mind in which virtue had fixed its empire, and though assailed by weakness, it sunk not into error.—“It is

proper we should part," said Alexina ; " lord Ellesmere can never be any thing to me, and Providence has graciously appointed this separation—Yes, in absence I shall recover my reason; I know my duty—let me endeavour to perform it."

The dress of Alexina was a present from the countess of Deveron ; it was rich lace over white satin ; at the back of her glossy hair, which was gracefully formed into Grecian bands, she wore a bunch of pearl roses ; her earrings, necklace, and bracelets, were also pearl, presented by the same generous hand.

Lady Honoria was splendidly arrayed in a robe of silver tissue, and made so brilliant an appearance, that Mr. Duncan declared her too resplendent to look on.

The ordering of the carriages was a most joyful sound to Mrs. Duncan ; and, to increase her delight, before they set out, lord Ellesmere arrived, and she was made completely happy at being seated in the same carriage with his lordship, lady Ho-

nor, and Mrs. Euston, while lady Deveron, Alexina, and Mr. Duncan, preceded them to the long room at the Northumbrian Arms.

The Hexham gentry were already assembled; and not a little vexation pervaded male and female bosoms to see the countess of Deveron leaning on the arm of Mr. Duncan, and his wife simpering under that of lord Ellesmere, as they entered the room.

Horace Winterthorn, in regimentals, was already there, and soon claimed the promised hand of lady Honoria, while lord Ellesmere led out the graceful Alexina, who blushed to hear the whispers of the young men—"the *Rose of Hexham* is more beautiful than ever."

Mrs. Duncan longed to be footing it away with the young people, but the countess of Deveron did not dance, and she felt constrained to follow her example.

Mrs. Euston, though still affecting illness, did not approve of being so near the observing eye of lady Deveron, and she

suffered herself to be prevailed on to dance.

The set being formed, and dancing commenced, Mrs. Duncan had time to cast her eyes round on her old friends, on whom she graciously bestowed a few nods of recognition.

Miss Frasier, presuming on an acquaintance of many years, ventured to approach with Miss Beverley, who having accidentally hurt her foot that morning, could not dance.

Mrs. Duncan felt very uneasy, for fear the countess should blame her for their impertinent freedom, but perceiving she spoke with much condescension to Miss Beverley, she ventured to introduce her much-respected friend, Miss Frasier, whom at that moment she most cordially wished at the de'el.

The affability of the countess soon reconciled her to their intrusion; and having taken seats, Miss Frasier pointed out Mrs. Ferment.—“It would be a difficult

matter, I believe," said the old maid, "to find out the nation to whom her costume belongs—a Polish robe and Spanish hat—sure never was any thing so ridiculously fantastic and absurd."

While Miss Frasier was commenting on the *melange* appearance of Mrs. Ferment, that lady was equally spiteful in her strictures on Miss Frasier's black velvet, which she declared looked like an old pall, that had been used at every funeral for the last hundred years—"And then," continued Mrs. Ferment, nodding her head, "only look at her shabby sunburnt wig; I protest I have seen her wear those same flowing tresses ever since I came to Hexham; it is my opinion she washes and irons her wig."

"Burn her wig!" returned a young buck; "I wish I had her seat."

"Her seat!" repeated Mrs. Ferment, "what, next to that everlasting larum, Mrs. Duncan? why, she would talk you to death!"

"Pooh!" replied the young man, "I

care nothing about the old Scotchwoman; I wish to get introduced to the countess of Deveron."

"Why, that is another old Scotchwoman," said Mrs. Ferment; "you had better try to get a seat next Miss Beverley, whose rosy blushes put her new pale pink sarsenet to shame; perhaps you might enliven the fair statue a little."

The dance being finished, lord Ellesmere led Alexina towards the countess, followed by lady Honoria, leaning on the arm of Horace Winterthorn.

"That young man," said Mrs. Ferment, "appears born to good fortune; he has already found a commission in his pocket, and I should not much wonder if he obtained a quality wife, for that little queen of diamonds seems mightily taken with his pretty person. It is really surprising how fortunate some people are in life."

"Bless my soul!" said Mrs. Portman, a fat widow, bustling up to Mrs. Ferment, "bless my soul! only observe the pride of a come-by-chance!"

“What has happened, my dear lady?” asked Mrs. Ferment; “what is the matter?”

“Oh, nothing of any consequence,” replied Mrs. Portman, “only that pert, proud thing, Alexina Duncan, never returned my courtsey; but the next time I bend my knees to her, a saucy thing, she shall remember the rules of good breeding.”

“When her quality acquaintance have left Hexham, she will be glad,” said Mrs. Ferment, “to remember her old friends; but Mr. Ferment and myself have made up our minds to cut the Duncans entirely.”

“How the girl is dressed to-night!” said Mrs. Portman; “Miss Frogly, who stood close by her, assures me all her ornaments are real pearl. Did you hear, Mrs. Ferment, that she actually refused lord Eastbrook, who offered to make her a countess directly?”

“Oh, her pride does not stop there, I assure you,” replied Mrs. Ferment; “she

has refused Mr. Norland, who is heir to the dukedom of Selkirk," said Mrs. Ferment: "the flatteries of the silly young men of Hexham have turned the girl's brain, and now, to be sure, the *Rose of Hexham* expects the hand of a sovereign prince. Lord help her, poor thing! I fear her vanity will be humbled."

"I never heard the like!" returned Mrs. Portman; "why, old Duncan's head must be turned to suffer her to refuse such great matches. I wish my daughters, the Miss Portmans, may be lucky enough to meet such grand offers—but every body has not equal good fortune in life."

When Alexina joined her party, she found, in addition to Miss Frasier and Miss Beverley, Mr. Norland.

"Can this be really possible?" said lady Honoria; "what! the philosopher at a ball?—Why, Mr. Norland, how could you prevail upon yourself to enter such a scene of dissipation?"

"I confess, lady Honoria," replied he, "it is rather matter of surprise to myself

that I am here; but I shall not dance, for I shall not afford others an example, by joining in what I do not approve."

"I am extremely fond of dancing," returned lady Honoria, "and wonder how any one can dislike it."

"Here sits a young lady," said Norland, turning to Miss Beverley, "who appears to prefer the conversation of those of riper years, to whirling about in the giddy mazes of an unprofitable dance."

"Not altogether unprofitable," replied lady Honoria; "for, considering dancing only as an exercise, it is good for the health."

"Not always," said Mr. Norland, bowing very low—"you will pardon me for taking the liberty of offering a contradiction to your opinion—dancing is not always good for the health; it is very apt to heat the blood; and I remember, when I was at college——"

Lady Honoria did not wait the conclusion of the sentence, for the music striking

up a favourite waltz, she suffered the enraptured Horace to lead her away.

Mr. Norland thought her very rude.—“This,” said he, mentally, “is modern politeness ! I much prefer the manners of the old school.”

Miss Frasier, like her friend Mrs. Duncan, was fond of appearing intimate with persons of rank, and while the countess of Deveron and Mr. Duncan strolled into the card-room, she was excessively happy to reply, in the most obliging manner, to Mr. Norland’s questions respecting the walks and rides round Hexham, and the families resident in its vicinity.

The silence of Miss Beverley, who rarely uttered more than a monosyllable at a time, quite charmed Mr. Norland, who at last asked her if she was not fond of dancing ?

“Not much, sir,” was the reply.

To several questions he proposed, her answers were equally short and modest, which appeared so agreeable to the no-

tions of Mr. Norland, that he began to think Miss Beverley was, of all females he had ever seen, the best calculated in mind and manners for a wife for him.—“ In the midst of temptation,” said he, “ she shuns the allurements of folly, and places herself under the protection of age and experience ; she exposes not her person in the wanton attitudes of the dance—No, her mind is pure—she will consider her husband her head, and will obediently follow his guidance.” Having thus considered Miss Beverley, he continued near her till Miss Frasier’s hour of departure, which was exactly at eleven o’clock, when he, having placed them in their chaise, withdrew to his lodgings, resolving to wait on Miss Frasier the next morning, in order to prefer a few necessary inquiries, previous to his making Miss Beverley an offer of his hand.

It was near midnight when lord Eastbrook led Miss Nelthorpe into the ball-room, followed by her unwieldy brother, sir Christopher, on whom the widow Port-

man, even before she buried her husband, had designs.

Mrs. Ferment protested the naked shoulders of Miss Nelthorpe were enough to put modest women to the blush, for though lady Honoria was to the full as indelicately dressed, yet in her it did not look so bad, her figure looking so very childish, while Miss Nelthorpe's person being full formed, obtruded most shamefully on the eye.

Lord Eastbrook led Miss Nelthorpe towards lady Deveron, the coolness of whose manner convinced him that she did not approve his choice; but, by no means disconcerted, Miss Nelthorpe, with more than usual gaiety, contrived to render herself more than ever pleasing in the eyes of lord Eastbrook, whom love had persuaded she was a most fascinating creature.

Sir Christopher having received a negative from several young ladies, whom he had asked to dance, seated himself between Mrs. Ferment and the widow Portman, who at last flattered him into asking her

to join in the dance. The little crummy widow, in high glee, gave him her hand, flattering herself that this would prove the prelude to a matrimonial offer, and suffered him to lead her to the set, where the loud breathings and grotesque grimaces of this flesh-loaded pair, created a scene of confusion not easily described; for while they panted after the time, the order of the figure was broken, and those who should have continued the dance, unable to proceed, laughed immoderately.

Mrs. Portman's gold muslin train at last got entangled round the knight's legs, and in his endeavour to extricate her robe, the widow fell sprawling on the floor: those who had before restrained themselves now laughed aloud.

The widow being a little recovered from her fall, exclaimed, in no very gentle terms, against rude and unfeeling behaviour.

Mrs. Ferment inquired if she was much hurt?

"No, ma'am," replied the widow, "not

so much in body as I am in mind, to see those who pretend to call themselves my friends, tittering and sneering, just as if I was the first person in the world who had met with a slip."

"Dear me! no, mem," said a young apothecary—"ladies are very apt to make a slip—he, he, he!" laughing at his own wit; "there are a great many in Hexham who have slipped more than once."

"None of your impertinence, Mr. Graham!" returned Mrs. Portman; "your allusions, I thank my stars, do not touch me; my good name is above the reach of a puppy like you."

"Puppy, mem!" repeated the young disciple of Galen—"puppy, mem! I do not understand, mem."

"No, sir, nor I do not understand your taking the liberty of mentioning slips to me—I that have maintained an unblemished character all my life! If sir Christopher shews a proper resentment on this occasion, he will call you out for your impertinence."

“That cannot possibly be done,” said sir Christopher; “he is not in the rank of gentlemen, or I would not mind blowing out his brains, to oblige you; but, my dear madam, if this young man has been impertinent to you, I will not hesitate to cane him.”

“I am sure, sir,” said the young apothecary, eyeing with no little trepidation the brawny arm of the knight, “I am sure I only meant a joke—I am very sorry if I have offended Mrs. Portman, and am ready to make her an apology.”

“More fool you!” whispered Mr. Ferment; “let sir Christopher cane you, and then you can bring an action against him.”

But sir Christopher’s gallantry in this instance was not likely to get the better of his prudence, for he suffered Mr. Graham to dance through the night, without again alluding to his offence, or shewing the least symptom of displeasure, though the widow, in high dudgeon, left the ball-room, and seated herself at a card-table,

where, entirely out of luck, she lost her money without recovering her temper.

To Alexina and lady Honoriâ the hours had appeared but moments; and when they were about to retire, Alexina innocently said—"How rapidly has this night flown!—Alas! how fugitive is pleasure!"

Lord Ellesmere involuntarily pressed the hand he held, while a conscious blush suffused her cheek, at having betrayed what she believed it her duty to conceal.

The little sentence she had uttered, though she wished it recalled, gave transport to the heart of lord Ellesmere, for he remembered Alexina had only danced with lord Eastbrook, captain Winterthorn, and himself; the former she had rejected as a lover, the second she knew was under engagements to lady Honoria Egerton.—“Delightful sentence!” said lord Ellesmere; “I will treasure thee in my heart; for in those few words I read the hope of future happiness.”

Having set down Mr. and Mrs. Duncan, Alexina expressed a wish to remain

with them the few hours that would intervene before her departure from Northumberland.

The countess, entering at once into her affectionate feelings, gave a ready assent, and at the same time bade her be in readiness by midday, as it was her intention to go one stage on the morrow.

On their way to the castle, lord Ellesmere informed lady Deveron, that having laid down all his plans, his presence was no longer absolutely necessary at the castle; and that having no inclination to turn recluse, he had resolved to attend her to London.

"Say, rather, my dear Algernon," said the countess, "that unable to part from Alexina, you are determined to accompany her. Well, be it so—of your honour I entertain no doubt; and so persuaded am I of the virtues of this lovely girl, that my most fervent wish is to see her your wife."

Mrs. Duncan declared she had passed an extremely pleasant evening, though

she confessed she was a little vexed at not being able to join in a reel; "but as the countess did not dance, why I could not possibly be so rude as to leave her.—Well, good-night, Alexina—Your dress was much admired, but we will talk of that to-morrow," said she, quitting the room, "I am too sleepy now."

Mr. Duncan felt sad at the idea of parting with Alexina; but unwilling to damp the pleasure her young heart anticipated from the journey, he carefully concealed his regret, and fondly kissing and blessing her, as she hung round his neck, he bade her good-night, adding—"Your mother, unused to late hours, will not be stirring with the lark—we will breakfast *tête-à-tête* in the study."

Alexina was not long in divesting her person of its costly adornments; but the day had dawned long before she could sufficiently compose her mind to yield to sleep—every turn of the eye, every word uttered by the graceful Ellesmere, was remembered with melancholy pleasure.—

"I have danced with him," said she, deeply sighing, "for the last time; and to-morrow—ah! how soon will it arrive! to-morrow we part, most likely to meet no more! or, if we should meet again, it will not be as now—I shall not be the honoured guest of lady Deveron, and he, it is probable, will have formed engagements that will entirely banish from his mind the humble Alexina!" The remembrance, too, that this was her first separation from her parents, filled her eyes with tears and her heart with additional sadness.

"The countess is certainly a most amiable woman," said Alexina, "and I have no doubt will continue to behave to me with the same attention, the same kind regard as now. In London, too, I shall meet ten thousand objects to engage and entertain me; I shall visit the scenes and partake of the pleasures which have so often delighted my fancy and excited my wishes, when I have heard them described by others—But my father, my dear father will not be there to participate my amuse-

ments—he, alas! will not be near to direct my judgment, to preserve his Alexina from the contagion of error.”

It was a full hour later than she had designed to give to rest, when Alexina arose; and she felt ashamed of having slept so long, when, on entering the study, she found Mr. Duncan already seated at the breakfast-table.

She attempted an apology for having, as she thought, kept him so long waiting; but taking her extended hand, and pressing it affectionately, he assured her he had but just risen.—“ And indeed,” added he, with a smile, “ if I had not remembered my promise of taking a *tête-à-tête* breakfast with a lady, I believe I should have been tempted to indulge a little longer; and you, Alexina, if I may judge by your heavy eyes, would not have objected to another hour’s sleep. But come,” continued he, “ sit down, my dear—a cup of strong coffee will be good for us both. We are but sorry rakes, I perceive; and if a town-bred beau or belle were to see our woeful

looks, we should excite much ridicule—well if we escaped contempt.”

“ I fear then, my dear sir,” said Alexina, “ I have much to encounter before I am properly initiated in fashionable life; for the countess, when in town, goes to every public amusement.”

“ Did I not entertain the highest opinion,” returned Mr. Duncan, “ of the understanding, the virtues, and discretion of the countess of Deveron, I would not for an empire’s wealth trust my Alexina to her care ! Of your health I am convinced she will be watchful—she is aware how much I prize the rose that blooms upon your cheek, and will not suffer late hours to fade its glow ; but while perfectly satisfied that the countess will watch over your health, I confess I am not a little solicitous respecting a treasure, over which yourself alone can be guardian—I mean your inestimable heart !”

Alexina blushed, thought of lord Ellesmere, and smothered a rising sigh.

“ The praise of a fond father,” resumed

Mr. Duncan, “ though it may be grateful to your feelings, will not make you vain ; and I may, I know, speak of your person without apprehending that my confessing its beauty will make your brain giddy, or inflame you with pride. On your appearance in the fashionable world, your person, my Alexina, will assuredly excite great admiration, and were it far less attractive, its novelty, and your *naïveté*, would draw round you a crowd of young men ; you must expect to be flattered extravagantly, and to have professions of love and friendship lavished on you. But it is not against these fashionable idlers, this herd of essenced coxcombs, I would warn you, for your own good sense would teach you to despise professions and flatteries, empty as the heads that made them ; but there are dissolute and unprincipled men of rank, whom pride of birth would prevent from indulging an honourable passion for the daughter of an humble surgeon, and against these I would guard my child—men, adorned by nature and

education, to captivate the unsophisticated female heart, and failing to seduce it from virtue, leave it to break with misery !”

Alexina pressed the hand of her father to her lips, and promised to treasure his counsels in her memory.—“ But, alas !” said she, mentally—

“ what can wisdom counsel,
What adamantine shield oppose to love ?”

and already has the weak heart of Alexina yielded to its power.”

Mr. Duncan now gave her a bill for five hundred pounds.—“ I know,” said he, “ that you think you shall not want half this money.”

“ I am certain I shall not,” said Alexina.

“ A lady in London,” replied Mr. Duncan, “ gets into a thousand expences that she never dreams of in the country—dress, cards——”

“ You know, my dear sir, I am quite ignorant of cards,” said Alexina ; “ I am not acquainted with a single game.”

“ You will be taught,” returned Mr. Duncan, laughing, “ and, like all other learners, will have to pay your teachers. Put up the money, my love—it is yours, to dispose of as you please.”

Supposing lady Eastbrook retired to rest many hours before their return from the ball, lady Honoria suffered her lover to attend her to the castle, and as usual she admitted him to her dressing-room, where, in the presence of Mrs. Euston, they were renewing their vows of eternal constancy, and settling the mode of their future correspondence, when the countess, not expecting the presence of captain Winterthorn, and curious to know whether her son had appeared at the ball with Miss Nelthorpe, appeared at the door. There was no time for concealment—no mode of retreat; and the delinquents were obliged to sustain the tempest of rage such a discovery brought upon them. Being repeatedly bid to depart by the enraged countess, Horace, more afflicted at the distress of

lady Honoria, than angry at the revilings of her mother, advanced towards her, and in a voice of anguish, said—"Farewell, lady Honoria! believe that I feel my own unworthiness, and lament, from my soul, having drawn upon you the resentment of your mother. Farewell, perhaps for ever! for who can tell the fate of battle? When I am gone, I trust you will forget the humble Horace, and bestow your hand where duty points, on a titled, wealthy lover!"

"Never! so help me Heaven!" replied lady Honoria, throwing herself into his arms—"never will I retract the vow of love plighted to you! Farewell—you take my heart with you; and if this is indeed our last meeting in this world, bear with you the conviction also, that I will never be the wife of another!"

The utterance of lady Eastbrook was choked by rage.

Horace pressed his lips to the cheek of lady Honoria, and whispered—"Depend

on my fidelity—in life and death I will be yours only !”

Mrs. Euston, glad to escape from the fury of the countess, retired with Horace, who now recollected he had left lady Honoria's picture on the toilet, which he requested Mrs. Euston to forward to him at the rectory.

After his departure, the countess execrated the folly of her son, for having hung a regimental coat on the back of a fellow who, but for the overflowings of his ridiculous gratitude, would never have presumed to aspire to an alliance with the house of Eastbrook.—“To be sure,” continued the countess, “he may be food for powder—Providence may, by his death, deliver me from the disgrace that threatens my family.”

To this unfeeling speech lady Honoria made no reply, but mentally put up a prayer for his preservation.

“I came hither,” said lady Eastbrook, “to inquire whether your brother sets off

with us to-morrow, for I suppose you are in all his secrets."

"I am not informed of his intentions, I assure you, madam," replied lady Honoria.

"My children would be happy," resumed lady Eastbrook, "if they were travelling with me to my grave."

"For myself I am certain," said lady Honoria, "I have never yet entertained so unnatural a wish, and I think also that I can answer for Adolphus."

"Can you answer," asked the countess, "that he will not marry that gill-flirt, that Miss Nelthorpe?"

"I cannot indeed answer for the influence she may have acquired over him," said lady Honoria; "but I hope he will not marry her."

"Oh, you can see the impropriety of that match?" returned lady Eastbrook; "I wish you were equally sensible of your own folly: but of this be assured, if lord Eastbrook disgraces his title by bestowing it on that girl, and if you presume to

marry that beggar Winterthorn, I will disclaim you both; and rather than either of you shall inherit my fortune, I will bestow it on public charities."

Sleep did not compose the spirits of the countess of Eastbrook. She had prepared a severe phillipic for her son; but as he did not appear at the breakfast-table, where she that morning joined the rest of the family, her ill-temper was divided in portions, among her servants, Mrs. Euston, and lady Honoria; and when the carriages drew up for their departure, and he did not appear, she declared she should not be surprised if the senseless infatuated wretch was to bring an eternal disgrace on his name, by not joining his regiment.

Lord Ellesmere took his seat beside lady Deveron, in her carriage, and designing to bid the venerable rector farewell, they drove off.

Lady Eastbrook, after waiting near an hour for the appearance of her son, at length learned from an under groom, that

his lord had set off in his *eaglette*, about seven in the morning.

“There is some abominable scheme on foot,” said the countess, “which I shall not, I fear, be able to prevent.” Scarcely giving lady Honoria and Mrs. Euston time to seat themselves, she ordered the coachman to proceed with all possible expedition.

Having reached the rectory, she beheld lord Eastbrook in earnest conversation with the elder Mr. Winterthorn, who had just received the farewell visit of the countess of Deveron and lord Ellesmere.

On perceiving her son, the countess ordered the carriage to stop. The rector bowed respectfully—the young peer nodded his head.

Without at all noticing the rector, lady Eastbrook said—“If you had not designed to travel with me, sir, I should have supposed common politeness would have suggested to you the necessity of apprizing me of your intention, that I might not have been kept waiting.”

“Have you really waited?” replied her son; “it was vastly kind and obliging, and, ’pon my nobility, I am very sorry to have occasioned you any delay, particularly if an hour or two is of consequence.”

“Every moment, sir, is of consequence,” said the countess; “I am impatient to quit this vile country, where I have met with so much insolent presumption.”

The rector had advanced to the other side of the carriage, to answer the inquiries after his health, made by lady Honoria, when the peculiar emphasis laid on the words *insolent presumption*, made him draw back. But lady Honoria, extending her white hand, said—“Will you not speak to me, Mr. Winterthorn? will you suffer me to depart without your blessing?”

Mr. Winterthorn pressed the white hand she extended to his lips, and pronounced on her a fervent blessing.—“Heaven, I trust,” said he, “will hear the prayer of a heart full of sorrow, and turn this hour of affliction into joy and gladness.”

“Hypocrite!” muttered lady Eastbrook, casting on the venerable rector a look of ineffable disdain.

“Why what is the matter, my little ‘Noria?” said lord Eastbrook; “your face is the exact semblance of an April day. Keep up your spirits, we only part to meet again.”

“I shall be happy to be informed, sir,” interrupted lady Eastbrook, “if you intend proceeding with me, or whether we are to part here?”

“I am infinitely obliged,” replied lord Eastbrook, “for your ladyship’s kind offer of a seat in your carriage, which, considering the extreme good-humour you appear to be in, would, no doubt, be particularly amusing and agreeable; but I have promised my friend Horace to drive him to Hexham, and there I have an engagement, which will deprive me of the honour you design me. I shall wait upon your ladyship when I arrive in town. Adieu, my little ‘Noria—keep your spirits up, and sing ‘See the conquering hero

comes !' Shall I order your ladyship's coachman to proceed ?"

Lady Honoria's eyes had been in search of Horace, who did not appear, and she now sorrowfully waved her hand to Mr. Winterthorn, as the carriage drove off.

There was so much goodness, so much to command respect in the appearance of the venerable rector, that lady Eastbrook, in spite of her pride and resentment, had been awed into silence, though she wished to upbraid him with what she considered the mercenary and ambitious designs of his son. She did not, however, restrain her speech when the carriage was set in motion, and she had not tired of the everlasting display of arrogance when they stopped before the door of Mr. Duncan.

The appearance of lord Ellesmere with the countess of Deveron put the spirits of Alexina into painful perturbation : she had hoped to be spared the anguish of bidding him adieu, and being already depressed, she feared her emotions would betray the secret of her heart. His intention of ac-

companying them to town was heard by her with sensations of rapture difficult to conceal, while Mr. Duncan lamented the danger to which her sensibility would be exposed in a residence with a young man, whose personal graces and elegant acquirements were so likely to engage her affections, and he wished that it was possible to prevent her being exposed to a trial, in which it appeared too probable her peace would be wrecked ; for even a reciprocity of tender sentiments would, in her case, be additional misery, for a reason existed in his mind, powerful enough to prevent their union, even were their hearts bound together by the strongest ties of love. It was, however, too late to recede—his word was given ; and having embraced her parents, with eyes swimming in tears, Alexina was placed in lady Deveron's carriage.

The countess of Eastbrook took a stately leave of Mr. and Mrs. Duncan, which lady Honoria made amends for, by the warmth of her good wishes, and the hope

she expressed that they might soon meet again.

"Alexina is very fortunate," said Mrs. Duncan, as the carriages drove from the door.

"Pray Heaven she may be fortunate!" replied her husband, a tear glittering in his eye—"pray Heaven she may be fortunate! I have a thousand apprehensions on her account, when I consider how far she will be removed from my protection."

"Why, bless me! Mr. Duncan," replied his lady, "I thought you considered the countess of Deveron quite a pattern of excellence; and under the eye of such a person, what can you have to apprehend for Alexina, whom I must do the credit to say, never discovered a forward or flirtish disposition, but always kept the young men at a respectful distance?"

"Margaret," said Mr. Duncan, kissing his wife affectionately, "this praise of Alexina's conduct does credit to the example she has been set by; but, my dear woman, she will, you know, be sur-

rounded by temptations—the society, the mode of living, the continual round of entertainments to which she will be introduced, may affect her health and her peace; and again I repeat, pray Heaven she may be fortunate!”

“I wish she may be fortunate enough to marry a man of rank and fortune,” replied his wife, “a duke or a lord—nay, even if she is as lucky as Maria Walsingham, and gets a baronet for a husband, it will be a grand thing; and then, I think, you will allow her going to London was very fortunate?”

“I would rather see her happy than great,” said Mr. Duncan.

A loud rap at the street-door announced visitors, and Mrs. Ferment and Miss Frasier were ushered into the parlour.

“We are come to condole with you on your loss,” said Mrs. Ferment.

“My loss!” repeated Mrs. Duncan; “I am not sensible of any I have sustained—has any body robbed me?”

With a malicious smile, Mrs. Ferment

answered.—“ Have not you lost Miss Duncan? has not the countess of Deveron robbed Hexham of its *Rose*?”

“ Mrs. Duncan, madam, cannot consider that a loss which will be so much her daughter’s gain,” said her husband.

“ Oh, certainly, very true,” observed Miss Frasier; “ the countess of Deveron’s partiality for Miss Duncan will, no doubt, be highly advantageous to her.”

“ But Mrs. Duncan, in the meantime,” said Mrs. Ferment, nodding her head, “ poor Mrs. Duncan will be inconsolable in her absence; so affectionate a mother will experience much anxiety and regret, in being deprived of the company of her amiable daughter, though at the same time she is sensible of all the honour and advantage of her situation.”

The malicious tone and manner in which this speech was made was not lost on Mrs. Duncan, who coloured deep as scarlet, and felt no little trepidation, lest the disclosure she had so imprudently made to Mr. Ferment was about to be laid before her husband; but from this ap-

prehension she was quickly relieved, for he, having a particular dislike to Mrs. Ferment, whom he considered a little ugly lump of mischief, soon made an excuse for leaving the ladies together, and went out.

“Pray, Mrs. Duncan, is it true,” asked Miss Frasier, “that Mr. Norland made an offer of his hand to Miss Duncan, and that she refused him?”

“And pray is it true also,” rejoined Mrs. Ferment, “that she refused lord Eastbrook?”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Duncan, “it is true enough, I assure you; Alexina Duncan has had two such offers as will scarcely fall to any other young lady’s share in Hexham, and has refused them both.”

“This is really most surprising,” said Mrs. Ferment, “and I much wonder that her parents—But I beg pardon, no doubt there was some important reason why she was not allowed to accept——”

“Allowed!” repeated Mrs. Duncan; “I assure you, ma’am, it was entirely her own doing; for my part, I was not wanting in

giving her such advice as I considered proper on the occasion. I was particularly anxious for her establishment in life, but Mr. Duncan would on no account constrain her inclinations; and as she fancied she could not be happy with either lord Eastbrook or Mr. Norland, why, she refused them both."

"Oh, was that the case?" replied Mrs. Ferment; "well, certainly Hexham is a terrible place for misrepresenting circumstances: report says there was a secret reason why Miss Duncan was not permitted to accept the great offers that were made her."

"I cannot even guess at the report you allude to, ma'am," said Mrs. Duncan; "but I am very certain that no reason existed for her refusal, but her own whims and folly."

"Well," replied Miss Frasier, "Mr. Norland is determined to have a Northumbrian wife, though Miss Duncan was so blind to her own interest as to refuse him; he will, I have great reason to believe, take a bride of my recommendation."

“Of your recommendation!” said Mrs. Duncan; “why, I never understood that you had any acquaintance with Mr. Norland! A bride of your recommendation! this is really very surprising, when it was only last night I introduced him to you at the ball.”

“You are perfectly correct in your statement,” returned Miss Frasier: “but you must understand, ma’am, he was greatly captivated by the appearance of Sophia Beverley, and seeing her under my protection, he waited upon me this morning, to make some inquiries respecting her temper and general conduct; and as she is really a very amiable girl, why, I gave her such a character as I have no doubt will induce him to make her an offer of his hand.”

“What!” said Mrs. Duncan, “make an offer of his hand to Sophia Beverley—to that humdrum piece of still life! make a duchess of that simpleton!”

“She will not be so simple as to refuse his offer, I am persuaded,” replied Mrs. Ferment; “and when she is a duchess,

she will perhaps shew a little more spirit ; she is a good sort of quiet inoffensive girl, and I wish her joy of her splendid prospects—She will make a pretty little duchess.”

“ No doubt,” replied Miss Frasier ; “ Sophia Beverley, you know, since the death of her mother, has resided constantly with that dreaming, prosing old bachelor, her uncle ; and living with people, one is apt to catch their manners, and, indeed, to imbibe their opinions ; but a little acquaintance with fashionable life will cure her of the awkward bashfulness which at present gives her a rather silly appearance : Sophia Beverley is no fool, I promise you, and will support her dignity with due decorum. I expect an invitation to pass the first winter after her marriage with her in town.”

Mrs. Ferment saw, by the countenance of Mrs. Duncan, that the intelligence conveyed by Miss Frasier was by no means agreeable ; and that she might report Mrs. Duncan’s vexation and disappointment at another place, she reminded Miss Frasier

of the lateness of the hour, and the number of calls they had to make.

Mrs. Duncan was indeed vexed to think that Alexina had acted so silly as to refuse being a duchess, and by her folly annihilated the hope that she had entertained of figuring herself in the metropolis.—“And now,” said Mrs. Duncan, “that wax baby, Sophia Beverley, will rise into rank. I have always hated the awkward puss since she trod a piece out of the train of my best worked India muslin, that cost me so much money. A duchess indeed! she is as much fit for a duchess as I am to be archbishop of Canterbury! And then that stiff, formal, antiquated virgin, Miss Frasier, to talk about being invited to spend a winter in London, the tiresome old fright! though, on second thoughts, it is not impossible but Mr. Norland may request her company, by way of having a scarecrow to terrify the young fops from hovering round his precious simpleton of a wife.”

The weather proving uncommonly mild and pleasant for the time of the year, her

journey to London was, in the most extensive sense of the word, an excursion of pleasure to Alexina; the kindness of the countess of Deveron was on all occasions unremitting, and the polite attention of lord Ellesmere seemed ever on the watch, to anticipate her wishes. A solicitude so flattering could not fail to weaken the prudent resolves of Alexina, who, no longer able to struggle against the passion his various graces and perfections inspired, could only sigh as she remembered the admonition of her father respecting him.

At every town through which they passed, they stopped to examine the public buildings, and whatever else antiquity rendered valuable, or art curious; and so far from having experienced any thing in the shape of fatigue, Alexina secretly regretted when the carriage stopped before the splendid mansion of the earl of Deveron, in Berkeley-square, to which the countess welcomed her, in terms at once warm, flattering, and affectionate.

The journey of the countess of Eastbrook was performed much more rapidly,

and far less agreeably; for while changing horses, and taking refreshment at an inn, on the second day after quitting Hexham, the newly-invented *eaglette* of lord Eastbrook drove up to the door, in which sat Miss Nelthorpe, habited in a fashionable riding-dress, and looking round her with an air so bold and confident, that the countess, having surveyed her with disgust and contempt, removed from the window to a more distant part of the room, declaring her astonishment at the conduct of her son, and the assurance of the bold thing he had made the companion of his journey.

In a few seconds lord Eastbrook entered the apartment, and undaunted at the frown that lowered on the brow of his mother, said—"I hope I have the happiness to see you all well?"

The countess made a slight inclination of her stately neck.

"'Pon my nobility, I consider our meeting at last quoitte fortunate! I really thought I should never have overtaken you. I assure you, I have drove my hor-

ses at a foine rate, to come up with you. Hope the journey has been pleasant—I feel quoitte happy to see you all look so well.”

“ Well or ill, sir,” replied lady Eastbrook, angrily, “ we are certainly under no obligations to your politeness or regard, who have left us to travel so many long and dreary miles alone.”

“ I really thought three persons in your ladyship’s carriage would be quoitte sufficient,” said lord Eastbrook, “ and my politeness would not allow me to incommode you, particularly as I remembered hearing you complain of being vilely crammed on our journey from town into Northumberland; besoides, I have a lady under my care, whom I have pledged my word of honour to see safely to London.”

Lady Eastbrook tossed her head with an air of contempt.—“ So I perceive,” replied she; “ and pray, sir, permit me to ask, did sir Christopher Nelthorpe approve of his sister’s travelling in your carriage, with no companion except yourself?”

“ Undoubtedly he did,” returned lord

Eastbrook; "sir Christopher himself placed her under my protection; and here we have luckily encountered your ladyship. Miss Nelthorpe will, I dare say, be glad of a little refreshment—with your permission I will introduce her."

"No, sir," replied the countess, "you have not my permission, I assure you."

Lord Eastbrook stared, as his mother continued to say—"I do not consider Miss Nelthorpe by any means a proper companion for lady Honoria Egerton."

"No!" said the peer; "this is quite unexpected, and vastly surprizing! And may I take the liberty of requesting to be favoured with your ladyship's reasons for objecting to Miss Nelthorpe's acquaintance?"

"My reasons," replied the countess, "are, I think, sufficiently obvious, and require but little explanation—Miss Nelthorpe having chosen to outrage propriety by travelling alone with your lordship, will certainly exclude her from the society of the females of your family."

Lord Eastbrook looked a little discon-

certed and confounded; but recovering himself, he said—" 'Pon my nobility, nothing in the least incorrect attaches to the conduct of Miss Nelthorpe."

" I really do not know," replied the countess, " what your lordship may consider or call incorrect, but according to my definition of the word, nothing can possibly be more glaringly incorrect than Miss Nelthorpe's travelling in your carriage, and remaining alone at an inn with your lordship all night."

" Ridiculous prudery!" exclaimed lord Eastbrook; " I really supposed your ladyship had possessed a more liberal way of thinking. Miss Nelthorpe's education has taught her to laugh at the customs, and despise the formal rules by which Englishwomen suffer themselves to be fettered."

" Her education," replied lady Eastbrook, " has also instructed her, I suppose, to despise delicacy and propriety—But I have no time to bestow on what I shall ever consider a very worthless subject."

Lord Eastbrook coloured highly, and repeating with great indignation the word

“worthless,” added—“I do not know a more amiable female than Miss Nelthorpe.”

“Myself, your sister, and our numerous friends, are greatly indebted to you for that compliment,” said the countess, haughtily.

“’Noria, my love,” resumed lord Eastbrook, taking his sister’s hand, “though lady Eastbrook refuses to admit a young lady of family and character to her presence, I request that you will go with me to——”

“Not to Miss Nelthorpe,” hastily interrupted the countess, “on pain of my everlasting displeasure! I forbid you, lady Honoria, quitting this room, or going near that imprudent girl, whose confidence has carried her such disgraceful lengths.”

Lady Honoria’s spirits were so much weakened by the separation from her lover, and the continued ill-temper of her mother, that she sunk on a chair, and burst into tears.

“Never,” resumed the countess, “never was any person tormented with their children as I am! I wonder in my soul,

lady Honoria, what can possibly provoke your tears! Do you weep because I will not permit you to form an intimacy with a person who, paying no sort of regard to the preservation of her own fame, would inevitably ruin yours?"

"Farewell, madam," said lord Eastbrook; "I will not obtrude either my own company or that of Miss Nelthorpe's upon you—I have had quite enough of your maternal solicitude, which is never weary of contradicting and opposing the wishes of your children. I have often been told your violent temper broke the heart of the earl my father, but I am determined you shall never break mine. Farewell, my dear little 'Noria! if we never meet again, may you be as happy as my fervent wishes can make you!"

He was quitting the room, when lady Honoria, throwing her arms round him, exclaimed—"Adolphus, my dear brother, do not, I entreat you, do not part from my mother thus!"

"When lady Eastbrook," said he, "is disposed to receive with kindness the lady

whom I intend to make my wife, I shall be ready to evince for her the affection of a son." He then disengaged himself from the embrace of his sister, and quitted the room.

A tear started to the eye of the countess, but she was too proud and too resentful to give way to any emotion of tenderness.— "Let him go," said she, "and it will be well if we never meet again, if such are the disgraceful conditions he presumes to make with his mother." Then giving orders for the carriage to be got ready immediately, she addressed some questions to Mrs. Euston, to whom she had scarcely deigned to speak since they left Ellesmere Castle.

Mrs. Euston could accommodate herself with surprising facility to the tempers of her superiors, and presently made an attempt to reinstate herself in lady Eastbrook's favour, by utterly condemning the conduct of Miss Nelthorpe, and wondering how she could have the effrontery to suppose that her ladyship would admit her to her presence.

Lady Eastbrook's carriage was drawn

up close to her son's *caglette*. With much state she ascended the steps, and having seated herself in her carriage, she accidentally looked up, and beheld her son and Miss Nelthorpe at a window of the inn; they were in earnest conversation, and, as far as she could judge by their countenances, appeared to be in high spirits.

Lady Honoria had anxiously wished to inquire after Horace Winterthorn, and how it happened that he was not of her brother's party; but no opportunity occurring for her to ask a single question of lord Eastbrook, silent and sad she followed the countess into the carriage, to pursue what she was certain would to her prove a disagreeable and melancholy journey.

The earl of Eastbrook, though resolved not to submit to the government of his mother, or to be influenced by what he considered her monstrous pride, was not destitute of filial affection; and when his anger had a little subsided, he regretted having spoken in such severe terms of the death of his father, and was sorry that he

had quitted her in the ungracious and resentful way he did; he also felt that lady Eastbrook's comments on Miss Nelthorpe's conduct were just, though very severe, and he was convinced, however ready love might be to excuse and palliate the errors and indiscretions of love, the generality of the world would hold opinion with the countess, and loudly censure Miss Nelthorpe for having travelled over such a wide tract of country, with a gay young man alone, whatever their engagements might be, and strong as her own confidence might be in his honour. But it was now too late to reflect on the imprudence of their procedure—her unbounded passion for him, as she most artfully persuaded him to believe, had induced her to leave Northumberland, and the protection of her brother, that she might remain with him to the last hour of his stay in England; and she was now proceeding with him to London, where he had some affairs to arrange, previous to his embarkation.

The worthy rector, actuated by far different motives than those mercenary and

ambitious ones that prompted the conduct of Miss Nelthorpe, resolved to accompany captain Winterthorn to the metropolis: he knew how much and how truly Horace doted on lady Honoria, and he was fearful that their mutual love would precipitate them into an imprudent marriage.—“If he should fall in battle,” said the rector, shuddering at the thought, “he shall leave behind him no disconsolate widow to lament his loss; should he return in safety, which may gracious Heaven grant! this young creature, during his absence, will have had time to probe her heart—to try the stability and sincerity of her affection: if it sustains undiminished the ordeal of absence, she may then bestow on him her hand—I will not, when she is of age, oppose their union.”

The rector had condemned the imprudent journey of Miss Nelthorpe, in severe terms, to her brother; but her residence at Aynhoe Lodge was a restraint upon the knight's pleasures—he could no longer entertain his jolly parties of noisy fox-hun-

ters, nor indulge to the excess he wished in the delights of the bottle; wishing to get rid of her, he neither objected to nor advised her against going to London under the convoy of lord Eastbrook. His sister had suggested to him the possibility of her obtaining the title of countess of Eastbrook before the earl left England; and as he considered this “a consummation devoutly to be wished,” and by no means to be defeated by fastidious objections, he replied to the observations of the pious rector, that his sister was of age, and old enough to take care of herself.—“I have no sort of fear of Clara,” said he; “she is too cunning to be caught in a man-trap.”

“But appearances, sir Christopher, appearances,” said the rector, “ought to be preserved; and though Miss Nelthorpe’s intention and conduct be in reality ever so correct and innocent, she ought to remember the respect that is due to herself and public opinion.”

“My sister is her own mistress,” returned sir Christopher, “and answerable

to no one for her actions; and is, as I said before, old enough to take care of her reputation.—A preaching old fool!" muttered he to himself, as he bowed to the good-morning of the rector, who, perceiving he talked to no purpose, walked away.

The countess of Eastbrook congratulated herself on entering her own mansion, in Cavendish-square.—"I may," said she, "be induced to make an excursion to a fashionable bathing-place during the summer months, where I am likely to meet persons of my own rank—but no more visits to old castles, where I shall be likely to be associated with company that I consider little better than the *canaille*."

Of the arrival of Horace Winterthorn and his father, as had been concerted between them, lady Honoria was informed through the medium of dear Mrs. Euston, who contrived an interview for the lovers at the house of her dress-maker.

Here captain Winterthorn spoke to lady Honoria respecting her picture, which, on the night they were surprised by lady

Eastbrook, he had left on her toilet, at Ellesmere Castle.

Lady Honoria expressed much surprise to hear he had not received it, as Mrs. Euston informed her she had sent it to the rectory the next day.

The loss of the picture was much regretted by Horace—not for its value, though it was richly set with brilliants, but on account of its being a fine likeness, and because it was now too late for her to sit again to an artist, he being to quit London the following day.—“Not,” said Horace, “that I shall stand in need of such a remembrance, for your image is deeply engraven on my heart.”

From captain Winterthorn, lady Honoria learned that Miss Nelthorpe had arrived in town with her brother, and had by him been placed in elegant and expensive lodgings, in the vicinity of sir William Belmont, whose lady was rendering herself extremely conspicuous by the extravagant style in which she dressed, and by the freedom of her manners, of which the public prints had taken notice in a

way very distressing to the feelings of her husband.—“ Miss Nelthorpe and lady Belmont having been schoolfellows,” said captain Winterthorn, “ their former intimacy is renewed; and, if I augur right——” Horace paused.

“ Why do you not finish the sentence?” asked lady Honoria; “ what do you augur?”

“ That Miss Nelthorpe will never be countess of Eastbrook,” replied he.

At the house of a friend lady Honoria received the parting embrace of her lover and her brother, whom she vainly endeavoured to see and be reconciled to the countess their mother; but in reply to his weeping sister, he said—“ My mother’s conduct, with respect to Miss Nelthorpe, will exclude me from her presence for ever! If I fall in battle, may Heaven bless her! but if I live to return, she must receive my wife, for my faith is pledged to Miss Nelthorpe, or I shall no more remember I have a mother.”

CHAPTER III.

" This lady glories in profuse expense,
 And thinks *distraction* is *magnificence* ;
 She hates a prude, and scorning all restraint,
 Whate'er she is, she'll not appear a saint :
 Her soul superior flies formality ;
 So gay her air, her conduct is so free,
 Some might suspect the fair not *over good* ;
 Nor would they be mistaken if they should."

A FEW weeks residence in London, with the improving society of some dashing young bucks of fashion, entirely divested the sentimental captain Walsingham of all his old-fashioned morality, and taught him that nothing could possibly be more ridiculous and absurd than marrying for love ; that a wife was always, after the honeymoon, a disagreeable clog on a man's pleasures, and for that reason should be chosen by weight, and not for the sake of " a set of features, or complexion," which, as the

immortal Addison wisely observes, “ soon grow familiar to the lover.”

It was clear as the noonday sun to every person who visited at sir William Belmont's, that Miss Claymoor was violently in love with captain Walsingham; and as the deaths of her father and brother had made her sole heiress of incalculable West India property, he began to listen to the advice of his sister, and to believe that Miss Claymoor, with her immense fortune, was to be preferred, as a wife, to the *Rose of Hexham*, with whose beauty and elegant accomplishments he had, to be sure, been much captivated; but then she had never given him the least reason to suppose his attentions were agreeable—she had never encouraged his addresses by any particular notice; neither did it appear probable that Mr. Duncan, though he lived in a liberal and genteel style, had amassed much wealth by his profession: according to the idea of captain Walsingham, the greatest portion Mr. Duncan could be expected to give his daughter would not ex-

ceed four or five thousand pounds; and that sum dwindled to a mere nothing, when compared with the wealth the little Creole would bring, to enrich a husband; and what was the trifling consideration of her dingy complexion, when it was remembered that her fortune would procure all the luxuries of the four quarters of the globe, and enable her husband to enjoy abroad the beauty which he did not find at home?

The advantages of such a marriage were too obvious to be overlooked, and though Miss Claymoor possessed very little personal attraction, her fortune seemed likely to render her an object of fascination in the eyes of many titled men, whose extravagant pursuits had embarrassed their estates; and lest she should, in a fit of caprice, make a transfer of her affections from himself to a sounding title, he "took once a pliant hour," and expressed to the delighted Miss Claymoor his hopes and wishes.

The silly heart of woman is easily persuaded to believe all the deceits uttered by

the man she loves : he flattered, vowed, and protested—she simpered, blushed, and consented to give him her hand, as soon as she threw off her mourning robes.

Though, blinded by love, Miss Claymoor could not see that it was her possessions, not her person, captain Walsingham was eager to make his own, she had yet discernment enough to discover that the conduct of lady Belmont was extremely imprudent, and that living under her ladyship's roof was adding nothing to her own reputation, and finding also that her having sometimes taken the liberty to remonstrate with her on her excessive extravagance and late hours had occasioned a coldness in the behaviour of her ladyship, she was the more ready to expedite the arrangements for her marriage with captain Walsingham, that she might have a house of her own, as her situation was becoming every day more and more unpleasant in that of sir William Belmont, where she was frequently necessitated to be present at the disputes between him and his lady, in the which she was fre-

quently appealed to by both, and though always declining to give an opinion, yet mentally obliged to confess that the goodness and generosity of the baronet was shamefully abused by his wife, who, not content with the very liberal allowance she constantly received from sir William, had run in debt to a large amount; nor was this all—the intimacy which had been so eagerly entered into with Miss Nelthorpe was displeasing to Miss Claymoor, who, in the presence of this new favourite, found herself totally neglected by lady Belmont.

Things were in this situation, when lady Belmont read in a morning paper the arrival in town of lady Deveron, with Miss Duncan and lord Ellesmere.—“So,” said lady Belmont, “the *Rose of Hexham* has brought her charms to a London market, I see.”

“I assure you she had splendid offers in Northumberland,” replied Miss Claymoor, “or report has greatly exaggerated.”

“That it always does,” said Miss Nelthorpe, yawning, “report always says too much. But pray, ma’am,” addressing Miss

Claymoor, "may I take the liberty of asking who were the great personages she so cruelly refused?"

"Why, the earl of Eastbrook, for one," replied Miss Claymoor, "made her an offer of his hand."

"Ridiculous!" said Miss Nelthorpe, affecting a laugh; "that is really too absurd for belief; the earl of Eastbrook could never seriously intend to marry old Duncan the surgeon's daughter."

"I shall not vouch for the truth of the report," returned Miss Claymoor, "but I was so informed by a correspondent."

"Some people delight in the marvelous," said Miss Nelthorpe; "but I think you spoke of offers—what other was she so barbarous as to reject?"

"I really forget the gentleman's name," replied Miss Claymoor; "Norland, I think."

"Ay, Norland is the name," said lady Belmont; "the old duke of Selkirk's heir."

"Oh yes," rejoined Miss Nelthorpe; "yes, I remember hearing that ugly little witch, Mrs. Ferment, mention something

about Miss Duncan's folly in refusing Norland; but, upon my honour, he is such a formal pedantic fool, that I do not think, if he could make me an empress, instead of a duchess, I would marry him. But, by-the-bye, lady Belmont, among all your former acquaintances, upon whose fair brow do you think he is going to bind his ducal coronet?"

"Certainly no one at Hexham," said lady Belmont.

"If you had an age to guess in," resumed Miss Nelthorpe, "you would never fix on the right person."

"Then do spare me all trouble," said lady Belmont, "and tell me at once who is to have the superlative happiness of being made a duchess."

"What do you think of Sophia Beverley?" returned Miss Nelthorpe; "do you not think she will support her rank with all proper dignity?"

"Marlowe, my smelling-bottle!" said lady Belmont to her woman, who was braiding her hair—"my volatile salts this instant, or I shall faint! Sophia Beverley

a duchess! Oh dear, the very idea makes me ill! Sophia Beverley in a rank above me! I shall never survive it—such a poor yea and nay thing as that—such an inanimate lifeless creature as her, to meet such uncommon, such surprising good-fortune, is actually too much to hear of with patience. Sophia Beverley, whom I remember, when we were at school together, was always remarkable for never joining in any little mischief contrived by the rest—who never romped, but was so very demure, that we used to call her lady Graveairs—and to think of her being married to the heir of a dukedom! Open the window, Marlowe, and give me a little air—I positively am so overcome, that I think I shall faint!”

“My dear creature,” said Miss Nelthorpe, “you are too sensitive; though I must confess the circumstance is very vexatious—one cannot help being mortified to see an intimate acquaintance in a superior rank to one’s self. I am sorry that I mentioned the affair, as I see it affects you so much.”

“Affects me!” repeated lady Belmont; “the idea of Sophia Beverley’s being a duchess almost destroys me.”

“And why so, Maria?” asked Miss Claymoor; “what difference can it possibly make to you, who are already married?”

“Yes, I know that to my sorrow,” replied lady Belmont; “I have no occasion for a friend to remind me of my misfortune.”

“I always thought Sophia Beverley an innocent inoffensive girl,” resumed Miss Claymoor; “it is true she is rather reserved, and seldom says much upon any subject; and it is certainly rather surprising that she, who is of so retiring a disposition, should marry so much above her expectations; but for my part, I do not envy her good fortune, but with all my heart wish her much happiness.”

“You say that, Charlotte, only to vex and provoke me,” said lady Belmont, “for I know in your heart you are as much mortified at the idea of her elevation in life as I am. But the old duke of Selkirk

is not dead yet, and I hope from my soul that he may live for thirty years to come at least; for then she will remain plain Mrs. Norland, to her own disappointment and my great joy. There is consolation in the thought—Yes, yes, it is possible the old duke may live many years.”

“Very true,” rejoined Miss Nelthorpe; “I believe old people live for the spiteful purpose of plaguing those who have expectancies from their decease: witness my aunt, whose death I prayed for on my knees every day for years, before the tiresome old soul departed.”

“If my prayers are heard,” said lady Belmont, “the duke of Selkirk will not depart this life for full thirty years to come, and I think I have heard he has a fine constitution. Sophia Beverley, as plain Mrs. Norland, may be endured; but figuring away as a duchess, the first time I met her in public, I should expire.”

The peculiar emphasis laid on *plain Mistress* Norland, and the contemptuous look which accompanied the sentence, induced a desire in Miss Claymoor to

mortify her ladyship in a way which she knew would be severe, because totally unexpected ; and the scheme that now occupied her thoughts she resolved to have executed before she gave her hand to captain Walsingham.

Miss Claymoor knew that peerages were frequently purchased ; and as she found that plain mistress excited no envy in lady Belmont's bosom, she settled it in her own mind to commence her matrimonial career with the title of countess, which, by placing her in a superior rank, would, she knew, be at once a dreadful mortification to her pride, and a punishment for the neglect with which she had lately treated her. When consulting with captain Walsingham on the occasion, he had sufficient cunning to hide the excessive pleasure he felt at her determination, affected to approve the scheme only as her wish, and promised to forward its accomplishment with all possible expedition, because she had declared she would not marry him till she saw him invested with the title of earl.

He also promised to keep the affair secret till the term of her mourning expired.

“Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,” said captain Walsingham, as he drove to the house of a learned counsellor, whose advice he wished to obtain relative to the purchase of this most earnestly-desired title—“This little dingy creole is a delightful creature,” said the captain, “and I really think I shall in time love her; but that is of no sort of consequence—she loves me, and I will make her a polite husband.”

Though only a few weeks married, sir William Belmont had discovered enough of the temper and principles of his wife to make him repent the imprudent gratitude that had precipitated him into a marriage, the very outset of which made him miserable, and held forth no other prospect than inevitable disgrace and ruin.—“How much better would it have been,” said sir William, “if I had given her a few thousand pounds! The world would in that act have considered my debt of gratitude to her family cancelled, and I should have

escaped the torment—the shame I continually endure. Henceforth let no man be deceived by an innocent countenance—never let him expect happiness with a woman whose mind he takes on credit, merely because she possesses a pretty face.”

Lady Belmont had resolved to figure at a masquerade the following week in boy's clothes, and mentioned her intention of sending for a midshipman's uniform before sir William, who at first did not believe her in earnest, till she talked of inviting captain Mervin to dine with them, that he might teach her to box the compass, and instruct her in some necessary nautical phrases.

Lady Belmont, to the great vexation of her husband, had already made herself very conspicuous with this naval commander; and sir William, in a sterner manner than he had ever before assumed, now expressed his utter disapprobation of the indelicate habit she had fixed on for the masquerade, and her acquaintance with captain Mervin.

Lady Belmont replied, that other per-

sons of fashion wore habits at masquerades, without consulting the opinions, or being restricted by their husbands.—“ Witness,” said she, “ the countess of Felsham, who appeared at the Pantheon as a footman, in blue and silver livery ; and lady Augusta Marmont, who, dressed in the regimentals of an officer in the guards, gave a challenge to major Hartley.”

“ The indecent conduct of two women who are notorious for outraging delicacy and propriety,” returned sir William, “ is no precedent for you ; and though their husbands may tamely endure infamy, I am not disposed to tolerate my own disgrace.”

“ You use very strong language, sir,” said lady Belmont ; “ and I really am at a loss to understand——”

“ Plainly, then,” interrupted sir William, “ I disapprove of your appearing in a male habit, and insist on your relinquishing the idea.”

“ Insist ! Do I hear right ? Insist ! Surely, sir William, I mistook the word ?” said lady Belmont ; “ you certainly could not mean——”

“ Maria, when I married you,” returned sir William, “ I fondly believed I had chosen a modest innocent girl, whom I should have no reason to remind of her duties ; but since your conduct proves that my peace, my approbation, is of no consequence in your eyes, I feel it my duty to assert the prerogative of a husband, and I command you to drop all acquaintance with captain Mervin, and I forbid you, madam, going to this masquerade at all.”

Before lady Belmont could recover from the surprise this unexpected mandate gave her, sir William had quitted the room, and she was left without an object to vent the rage upon that filled her mind, at the idea of being managed by a husband. In the course of the day she related to Miss Claymoor the behaviour of sir William, which she declared was absolutely brutish—“ But do not let the little fright suppose,” said she, “ that I shall tamely submit to his government. I married him for the sole purpose of pursuing my own inclinations, and I will let him see that I am not to be controlled.”

“ I am persuaded,” replied Miss Claymoor, “ that on reflection you will see the propriety of not urging the temper of sir William too far : he has a most excellent heart, and it is in your own power to lead a life of happiness.”

“ I wish with all my soul he had taken a fancy to you,” said lady Belmont; “ you, no doubt, would have made him a most excellent wife—you would never have gone into public, but, under his protection—like Darby and Joan, you would have been an enviable pair.”

“ A man of sir William Belmont’s disposition would make any reasonable woman happy,” said Miss Claymoor.

“ Then she must be blind,” replied lady Belmont; “ for whenever she saw his little ugly face, she would have occasion to recollect his title and fortune, to reconcile her at all to such a fright of a husband.”

Miss Claymoor shook her head.—“ Fie on you, Maria !” said she; “ gratitude for having made you the partner of that title and fortune ought to teach you to speak with more respect.”

“ I have no respect for a man,” returned lady Belmont, “ who is for ever moralizing and preaching against the pleasures which I delight in. Sir William Belmont pretends to say he married me for love; but I promise you, I could dispense with the fondness that is for ever contradicting my wishes. You call him a generous man—it is a strange proof of generosity to be perpetually pointing out my extravagance: but I will not be lectured like a child, and kept in leading-strings; I will dress as I think proper, choose the company most agreeable to myself, and go, without asking permission of my doughty lord and master, to those public places that promise to afford me amusement.”

“ Maria, be advised,” said Miss Claymoor; “ do not provoke sir William to a conduct you may hereafter repent.”

“ I am sure,” replied her ladyship, “ I most heartily repent having put my conduct under his circumspection.”

She then hastily rung for her woman, to whom she gave orders respecting her dress for the evening.—“ I suppose,” said she,

addressing Miss Claymoor, "you will accompany me to lady Pelham's?"

"I wish," replied Miss Claymoor, "I could persuade you to give up lady Pelham's acquaintance altogether—remember how large a sum you lost last week at her faro-table."

"Yes, I remember it to my sorrow," said her ladyship, "for I left behind me every guinea I had in the world, besides the thousand pounds I borrowed of you; and had I no other motive for continuing her acquaintance, the hope of winning back my money would indeed be a sufficient inducement to continue my visits."

When dinner was announced, lady Belmont's resentment against her husband had not sufficiently subsided to allow of her meeting him at table, and she ordered a chicken to be served in her dressing-room.

Miss Claymoor endeavoured to palliate her behaviour, by saying lady Belmont had a pain in her head. Sir William was not deceived—he understood the motive

that made her absent herself from table; but unwilling to expose his domestic differences to the animadversions of servants, he admitted the excuse delivered by Miss Claymoor, but at the same time resolved not to suffer indisposition, real or pretended, to move him from the measures he was fixed to adopt, as necessary to stop his wife's progress in the road to ruin.

Miss Claymoor had already supplied the extravagances of lady Belmont with the loan of five thousand pounds; and she determined not to go with her to lady Pelham's, lest, witnessing a repetition of her gambling distresses, she should be induced to afford her a fresh pecuniary supply, and thus, by indulging her propensities, become an accessory in the ruin of sir William's fortune; she therefore pretended a prior engagement, and availing herself of that opportunity, went to pay a long-promised visit to a West India merchant's lady in the city.

Lady Belmont had never really liked Miss Claymoor, but she had always found

her purse extremely convenient; nor would she on the present occasion at all have regretted her not going with her to lady Pelham's, but from the apprehension that she might be again a loser, and want her assistance. But recollecting that Miss Nelthorpe, who was to be of the party, had lately come into possession of a large fortune, and would no doubt supply her with any sum she might chance to want, she made her mind perfectly content, and was not very sorry to escape the reproofs, which she was certain she should meet from Miss Claymoor.

Dressed in all the extravagance of fashion, lady Belmont stepped into her carriage, which was ordered to the lodgings of Miss Nelthorpe, with whom she found a young man, whom she remembered to have seen with lord Eastbrook.

"Fullerton has infinite taste," said Miss Nelthorpe, perceiving the eyes of lady Belmont fixed on the young man, who appeared a little confused; "he has dressed my hair delightfully, and I have detained

him to place my ornaments—in France we have always male attendants.”

The business of the toilet being completed, Mr. Fullerton was dismissed, and lady Belmont rallied Miss Nelthorpe on being shut up with a handsome young man, “who, though only a hairdresser, has a person,” said her ladyship, “that might endanger the virtue of a duchess.”

Miss Nelthorpe laughed, and protested hers was in no danger. The occurrences of the day were repeated by lady Belmont as they drove to lady Pelham’s, and her own determination to be perfectly her own mistress, in spite of the opposition of sir William—a resolution much approved and applauded by Miss Nelthorpe, who declared, a woman must be an absolute idiot who submitted to the tyranny of a husband.

At lady Pelham’s, the rooms were crowded with fashionable idlers of both sexes; and here lady Belmont encountered the countess of Deveron, Alexina Duncan, and lord Ellesmere. Affecting all the warmth of real friendship, lady Belmont expressed

her happiness at meeting Miss Duncan, of whose arrival in town she pretended to say she was ignorant. Alexina introduced her friends, and lady Belmont, while contemplating the elegant figure of Ellesmere, entirely forgot the appointment she had made with captain Mervin, whom she had promised to meet at lady Pelham's, for the purpose of arranging a party for the masquerade.

Lady Deveron politely returned the salutation of Miss Nelthorpe, but it was evident that she had no intention to encourage any approach to intimacy; and perceiving a party of her own friends at the opposite side of the room, she took the arm of Miss Duncan, and gracefully bending to lady Belmont, she passed on.

Miss Nelthorpe could not avoid noticing the distant manner of the countess; but too well satisfied with herself, and assured of the power she had obtained over lord Eastbrook, to suffer trifles to disconcert and ruffle her serenity, she replied with an air of perfect gaiety to the extravagant compliments of a French marquis, whom she had

known at Paris, and now rejoiced to meet in England, being persuaded that her charms had made a slight impression on his heart, which, in case of lord Eastbrook not returning to fulfil his engagement, she might turn to good account.

Not having her temper under the same happy control as her companion boasted, lady Belmont felt extremely vexed to see lady Deveron's party moving away; her eyes eagerly followed the steps of the graceful Ellesmere, whom she would most willingly have retained by her side; and she greatly envied the happiness of Miss Duncan, to whom he appeared to pay much polite attention. Lady Belmont had always believed that Alexina Duncan possessed the affections of Horace Winterthorn, and that her charms had rendered him blind to the partiality she had endeavoured to make him sensible she entertained for him; but having, since her own marriage, heard of his engagements with lady Honoria Egerton, she felt much more reconciled to Miss Duncan, and resolved on immediately renewing her acquaint-

ance with her, not doubting, but through calling on her she should form an intimacy with the countess of Deveron, and of course with lord Ellesmere, who resided with her. While these thoughts were rapidly passing through her brain, she was accosted by lord Henry Villars, who inquired if she knew who that divinity in pale blue velvet was, on whose arm the countess of Deveron leaned?

The admiration Miss Duncan's beauty excited was so universal, that lady Belmont felt, as formerly at Hexham, envious and mortified to hear her person so rapturously extolled by lord Henry Villars and a party of young men, who, joining them as they paraded the rooms, spoke of her as by far the handsomest female present.

Lady Belmont coloured with indignation to find her own person placed in the back-ground; while, whatever were the feelings of Miss Nelthorpe, she took care they should not be discovered, either in look or word, for with a laugh she replied—"Novelty, we know, has prodigious charms, and the *Rose of Hexham* will

have her day, and proudly flourish, till some newer beauty sends her, like her predecessors, to languish in the shade."

"The *Rose of Hexham*!" repeated lord Henry Villars; "I really am so stupid, that I must beg, ma'am, to know what you mean—will you do me the favour to explain?"

"Oh, certainly, my lord," replied Miss Nelthorpe; "I mean to inform you that the *Rose of Hexham* is the appellation Miss Duncan is generally known by in Northumberland."

"What a beautiful flower, to grow so far north!" said sir James Clairville, another sprig of quality—"Oh that this lovely rose grew in my parterre!"

"It would be a great pity," observed a young naval officer, "that so fair a rose should be so ill disposed of. You would pluck the flower, smell to it, and cast it aside to wither."

"Which certainly would be a most deplorable fate for the surgeon's daughter," said lady Belmont, invidiously.

"What did you say, lady Belmont?" ask-

ed lord Henry Villars; "is this Rose, as you call her, nothing more than a surgeon's daughter?"

"No more but this," replied lady Belmont, "I promise you."

"Come along, sir James," resumed lord Henry, "you are well known to lady Deveron, and shall introduce me to the party."

"Why, sure you have not the cruel intention to wither the rose?" said sir James Clairville, ironically.

"No possibility of saying what may happen," replied lord Henry, taking his arm; "a surgeon's daughter is a person of no consequence, you know."

"For shame! for shame!" said the young sailor, warmly; "every female is not only of consequence in her own family, but to society, to whom she is accountable for the example she may set by unworthy conduct; and I am sorry to find lord Henry Villars, with a sickly countenance, and attenuated figure, has not better thoughts, and nobler designs, than se-

ducing beauty and betraying innocence."

"My countenance and figure," said lord Henry, bowing, "are infinitely obliged to your compliments."

"Bravo! my noble son of Neptune! Such sentiments do you honour," said captain Archer, who, that moment, came up to speak to the young sailor.

"Yes," returned lord Henry, with visible pique, "Conyers preaches well, but practice, we all know, is a different affair."

"My precept and practice," said the young sailor, "will always be found——"

"Wide as the poles asunder," interrupted lord Henry; "but the next time you feel disposed to act the puritan, and give a specimen of your preaching abilities, I beg you will not take the liberty of displaying your abilities at my expence."

The young sailor coloured highly, and warmly replied, in defence of female innocence he would display his abilities, if abilities he possessed, whenever an occasion like the present occurred.

"Not to me, sir," said lord Henry, with all the *hauteur* he could command; "the

repetition of such a liberty will be dangerous."

"To you, or any man," returned the young sailor; "and if you, my lord, are disposed to feel offended at what I have already said, you know where I am to be found." He then walked away with captain Archer.

Lord Henry Villars looked chagrined, and said—"This Rose has thorns, I find already; and it is not improbable but I may be called out on her account."

"Lord! what a fuss about a surgeon's daughter!" exclaimed lady Belmont; "I hope your lordship will not get into a quarrel about the girl—it will really be giving her too much *eclat*."

"Her beauty has obtained her as much *eclat* as female vanity can desire," returned sir James Clairville: "when she appeared in the countess of Deveron's box at the opera last night, a buz of admiration ran through the whole house; and as to my friend, lord Henry, who is so anxious for an introduction to the fair stranger, he may as well avoid the danger of falling in.

love, for it is whispered, that she is actually addressed by lord Ellesmere."

"The devil!" said lord Henry; "if that is the case, the *Rose of Hexham* will certainly not grace my parterre. Ellesmere is a fortunate fellow; for being independent, he can act as he pleases. Oh, what a cursed bore it is to be fettered by the control of avaricious mothers and splenetic maiden aunts!" Alexina Duncan had already refused an earl, and the heir to an ancient dukedom, and was now addressed by the wealthy lord Ellesmere, who was in person so graceful, in manners so elegant, it was impossible he should woo in vain.

These thoughts were two-edged daggers to the heart of lady Belmont, who, almost dragging Miss Nelthorpe from her agreeable *badinage* with the French marquis, exclaimed, in a tone of spite—"I am almost inclined to believe that old Duncan, with her other accomplishments, has taught his daughter the art of witchcraft."

Miss Nelthorpe laughed, and asked what could have inspired such a strange notion?

“Not so strange,” replied lady Belmont, “if you consider the matter as I do: there is certainly something more than natural in the admiration that all the men express. In Hexham you never heard of any one’s beauty being talked of but Alexina Duncan’s; and here in London, where I expected she would be overlooked and totally eclipsed, here it is the same tune exactly—we are tormented and annoyed with the insufferable charms of the beautiful Miss Duncan. Is it not provoking, that wherever that girl appears, the men have no eyes but for her—no praises but what they lavish upon her? I am settled in the belief, that she casts enchanted powder in their eyes.”

“I see nothing particular in her, for my part,” said Miss Nelthorpe: “her person and face are very passable, to be sure, but they excite no envy in me—I am perfectly content with the adulation I receive, and satisfied with the influence I possess over those hearts I think worth the trouble of subjugating.”

“You are a most enviable creature!” re-

plied lady Belmont, with a sigh; "it would be a great happiness for all your friends, if they possessed your charming *nonchalance*; for my part, I own I am far from indifferent on the effect of Miss Duncan's charms."

"Why, you are not jealous of sir William, are you?" asked Miss Nelthorpe.

"Of sir William? Oh, Heaven deliver me! No, he has my permission to make love to Miss Duncan, or any other Miss he chooses," said lady Belmont; "his infidelity would give me no pain, I promise you: I did not marry for love, therefore shall never be jealous of my husband."

"True," returned Miss Nelthorpe, "the world at large, my dear, gives you full credit for not having married for love. But allowing this, our pride may be jealous of a husband preferring another, though he may not possess our affections."

In the apartment where the faro-bank was established, captain Mervin was waiting the arrival of lady Belmont, on whom he had designs of a most licentious nature, and was much pleased to see her unattended by Miss Claymoor, whose presence had

hitherto been a check upon the infamous scheme he had formed of seducing her into playing for a much larger sum than she could possibly raise, and by assuming the character of her friend, and supplying her with money to pay her losses, place her completely in his power. The demon of gambling had gained entire dominion of lady Belmont's mind, and stinging her with the vexatious remembrance of her recent losses, urged her to hope a more propitious moment, when, by winning a large stake, she should be able to pay her debts of honour. Stimulated by this hope, she wishfully eyed the heaps of gold that glittered on the table, and lolling on the arm of the artful insinuating Mervin, advanced to join the groups of titled sharpers that were crowding round it, when suddenly recollecting that she had not a guinea in the world she could honestly call her own, she drew back, and faintly whispered—
“No, I will not be tempted; let us quit the room; I will not play to-night.”

“Pardon me, my dear lady Belmont,” said captain Mervin, guessing the motive

by which she was actuated, "pardon me, but in my opinion you ought to play to-night; you certainly were a little unsuccessful the last time you were here, but fortune will not persevere in unkindness to so much loveliness—she will to-night, I am persuaded, remunerate you for her late severity."

"If I could persuade myself I should be fortunate," returned lady Belmont, hesitating—"But no, I had better not hazard any more money—Yet how I am to settle my debts of honour without sir William's knowledge, Heaven only knows! and when the dreadful amount reaches his ears, mercy upon me!"

"Why, he would certainly say," replied captain Mervin—

"If to her share some trifling errors fall,
Look on her face and you'll forget them all."

"What flattery!" said lady Belmont, smiling; "but you mistake sir William's character—he would not be so polite, I assure you; he would rave against my extravagance with the utmost severity, and,

as he never plays himself, would never forgive me for incurring debts at a faro-table."

"He must be a barbarian," replied captain Mervin, "if he could be angry with you for a moment."

This speech was accompanied with a look, and a gentle squeeze of the hand, which lady Belmont ought to have repressed; but heaving a gentle sigh, she addressed herself to Miss Nelthorpe, who was silently admiring the rapidity with which the gold changed its possessors, and observing the joyful expression depicted on the features of the winners, and the wild distress and even despair betrayed by the losers.—"I suppose, Clara," said lady Belmont, "you will be tempted by-and-by to be more than a looker-on."

"No," replied Miss Nelthorpe, "I have made a vow never to stake any money at a faro-table, and I feel no sort of temptation to break it."

"I wish I had never been tempted to play," said lady Belmont; "but as it is, I must endeavour to retrieve my losses."

Can you lend me a hundred pounds? Perhaps with your money I may be lucky."

Miss Nelthorpe was exceedingly sorry she could not oblige her, but not intending to play, she was unprovided with cash.

"How provoking!" said lady Belmont; "for something seems to assure me I should be a winner to-night."

"My dear lady Belmont, I shall have much pleasure in being your banker," said captain Mervin; "allow me," presenting his pocket-book, "to supply you with a few hundred pounds."

Lady Belmont saw the impropriety of accepting a second loan from this gentleman, and for some time declined his offer; but he was so pressing to be suffered to oblige her, and Miss Nelthorpe observed it was really a pity to lose a golden opportunity, particularly when her own mind held out an incentive by presaging good luck. Too weak to resist the flatteries of captain Mervin, and her own inclination, she took the proffered loan, and again they advanced to the fatal table, and beheld thousands in a few moments won and lost.

At first lady Belmont was, as she had augured, extremely lucky. But the capricious goddess soon grew weary of her favourite; and the money she had won, together with the seven hundred pounds she had borrowed of captain Mervin, was swept away, by Miss Nelthorpe's friend, the French marquis, who, cringing and bowing as he pocketed his cash, declared he was extremely sorry to win the money from a beautiful lady.

Pale, trembling, and almost fainting, lady Belmont, fleeced of her last guinea, determined yet to persevere, and was turning to captain Mervin to ask for three hundred pounds more, when, to the great disappointment of the exulting Mervin, and her own consternation, her eyes fell on the face of her husband, who had followed her to the table, and been a spectator of the frantic eagerness with which she had followed up her losses.—“Sir William Belmont here!” said she, in a low whisper, to Miss Nelthorpe; “now then, the storm I dreaded will burst upon me!”

Sir William advanced towards her.—

"Fortune, madam," said he, in a voice so calm and gentle, that the surrounding groups, who stood in expectation of a burst of reproachful rage, were struck with admiration and astonishment, "fortune has completely deserted you to-night; I trust you are not always thus unlucky?"

Lady Belmont stood confounded, and unable to reply.

"May I presume to ask," continued sir William, "to what amount you stand indebted to this gentleman?"

"Oh, a trifle, sir William," replied the captain, bowing, "a mere nothing—I shall win it back from lady Belmont some other time."

"I fancy not, sir," replied sir William, sternly.

"A sum not worth mentioning," said the captain; "we will settle it some other time."

He was then retiring, but sir William placing himself before him, insisted on his staying—"To the question, sir," said he; "what money have you lent lady Belmont?"

Finding it impossible to evade, the captain replied—"Only seven hundred pounds."

"I am under infinite obligations to your politeness," said sir William, at the same time presenting him with notes to the amount of the debt. He then took the hand of lady Belmont, and led her to her carriage, where having placed her and Miss Nelthorpe, he ordered the coachman to proceed.

"Thank Heaven," said her ladyship, "he did not get into the carriage! But what will be the end of this I cannot think, for, under all his calmness and politeness, I can read a hurricane of rage. Oh that I had never married! I declare to you, Clara, I am afraid to meet sir William."

"Nonsense, child!" replied Miss Nelthorpe, "afraid of that little animal! I thought you had been mistress of more courage. If he raves, do you rave also; if he exclaims against gambling, tell him he can afford to lose a few thousands—say that you are passionately fond of play, and that if he loves you as he has professed,

he will not grudge to indulge your favourite propensity at such a trifling expence, particularly when he reflects that a run of good luck the next time you play may retrieve all your losses."

"Your counsel is good," returned lady Belmont, "if I can only exert sufficient spirit to follow it, which, to say the truth, I much doubt. I would you were to be present when sir William and I meet, for I am certain I shall need the support of friendship!"

Miss Nelthorpe's friendship for lady Belmont, though extremely warm in profession, went no farther—it did not extend to the romantic length of lending her money, or engaging in her quarrels; and the very moment her ladyship's carriage drove from her door, she vehemently condemned her imprudent passion for play, and laughed immoderately, as she recalled to mind the consternation and distress pictured on the countenance of her dear friend, when she discovered that her little ugly husband had been an eye-witness of

the infamous waste she was making of his fortune.

Lady Belmont, on her return home, retired immediately to her dressing-room, where she impatiently waited some time before her woman made her appearance, though she repeatedly rung for her. In no very gentle tone her ladyship demanded where she had been, that she did not answer the bell immediately?

Mrs. Marlowe begged pardon, with much submission confessed she had heard the bell, but could not come, because she was detained in the library by her master.

“By your master, in the library!” repeated lady Belmont, with a sneer; “really! Sir William has been making love to you, I suppose, Marlowe? You may tell me the truth—I shall neither be jealous of sir William, nor angry with you, I promise you.”

“Making love to me! No indeed, my lady,” said Mrs. Marlowe, not a little surprised at the suspicion—“no indeed, sir William is too civil a gentleman; and I

hope has a better opinion of me, though I am but a servant."

"Well, well," returned lady Belmont, pettishly—"I have no desire to be sickened with his civility or your hopes; tell me at once, what were you doing with sir William in the library?"

"Doing, my lady!" said Mrs. Marlowe; "la! my lady, I was doing nothing at all—not I. Dear me! sure your ladyship does not suspect that I am a person——"

"Ridiculous nonsense! I tell you again," replied lady Belmont, "I am not at all disposed to be suspicious or jealous—only tell me what was sir William saying to you?"

"Oh, dear me!" resumed Mrs. Marlowe, "I am very glad I mistook your ladyship's meaning."

"I wish I could know yours," said lady Belmont, impatiently—"will you tell me what passed between you and sir William?"

"Yes, yes, my lady," returned Mrs. Marlowe; "I intended to tell your ladyship all about it, only your ladyship confused me a little. My master sent his valet, Mr.

Parker, to tell me to come to him in the library. La! said I, Mr. Parker, what in the world can sir William want with me?"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed lady Belmont, "I do not want to hear what passed between you and Parker—You went to the library?"

"Yes, my lady, I went to the library," resumed Mrs. Marlowe; "and so, my lady, sir William said—'I know, Mrs. Marlowe, you are in all your lady's secrets—there is a guinea for you: I wish to ask you a few questions, and if you answer them truly, that guinea has a fellow.'"

"Very fine truly!" exclaimed lady Belmont; "bribery and corruption! So much for the correct morality of sir William Belmont. Well, go on."

"And so, my lady," said Mrs. Marlowe, "sir William asked me, whether captain Mervin ever came here in his absence, and whether the captain was ever alone with your ladyship? And I said, I never saw captain Mervin here in my life, but at two of your ladyship's routs, and three times when he dined here with other company."

“ So, so! sir William is jealous, is he?” returned lady Belmont—“ mean, contemptible wretch! But proceed, Marlowe.”

“ And then, my lady, sir William asked me if I knew of any bills that your ladyship owed to your tradespeople?”

“ And what answer did you make to that question?” asked lady Belmont.

“ I said I knew nothing at all of the matter,” replied Mrs. Marlowe. “ La! my lady, I should not have lived so many years with the duchess of Darewell, if I had been given to blab and tell secrets.”

“ You have acted in this business very properly,” said lady Belmont, “ and I will give you another guinea for knowing how to hold your tongue. But what is that paper you are squeezing and twisting so unmercifully?”

“ La! bless me!” said Mrs. Marlowe, “ I have been so flusterated with sir William sending for me to the library, that I quite forget what I am about—I beg pardon, my lady, for my stupidity; this paper,” smoothing it between her fingers, “ this paper is a note my master bade me give to

your ladyship, and I have crumpled it till it is not fit——”

“A note from a lover might have been of consequence,” returned lady Belmont, “but from a husband can be of little importance. Let me see, what can a note from sir William Belmont mean?”

Mrs. Marlowe again apologized for having crumpled it.

Lady Belmont tore it open; it merely said, that supposing she might be a little feverish from the agitation occasioned by her losses, he had ordered a bed to be prepared for himself in another apartment.

“Really sir William has more politeness than I suspected,” said lady Belmont, throwing the note disdainfully on the fire. “Another apartment! mighty well indeed! For my part, I entirely approve his notion of separate beds—it is a fashionable arrangement, and on that account is sure to meet my concurrence and approbation.”

“No doubt, my lady, sir William thinks you will be greatly vexed,” said Mrs. Marlowe.

“Then he is greatly mistaken,” replied her ladyship: “if he believes he mortifies me, he deceives himself—I am positively quite happy to get rid of the little fright.”

Inquiring if Miss Claymoor was returned from her city visit, her ladyship was informed that she was below in the library with sir William and captain Walsingham.

“Ay, Heaven help me!” said lady Belmont, shrugging her shoulders, “I am the unfortunate subject of this midnight conference—they are passing judgment on my abominable offences; no doubt all my shameful extravagances are being condemned without mercy by this delectable trio.”

“Your ladyship is not at all more extravagant than other ladies of rank and fashion,” replied the obsequious Mrs. Marlowe.

“No, perhaps not,” resumed lady Belmont; “but unhappily for me, sir William loves his money better than any thing else in the world; and then he has such old-fashioned notions of prudence and decency,

and such-like stupid stuff! Well, happy are they who can command money when they want it, without applying to the purse of a fault-finding husband."

"And that, I hope, is your ladyship's case," said Mrs. Marlowe, curtsying and simpering.

"There is not a woman of fashion in London who wants money at this moment worse than I do," returned lady Belmont, with a deep sigh; "I have had such a run of ill luck that I am reduced to my last guinea, and how to raise money to pay that troublesome old Frenchwoman's bill, that teasing everlasting dun, madame Laval, I know not: to-morrow she will be here again, and if sir William sees her we shall have fine work, for he gave me money a fortnight ago to pay her demand. But come, Marlowe, undress me—I am weary and out of spirits."

"I wish," said Mrs. Marlowe, "I could say something to divert your ladyship, and put you in spirits."

"I wish you could put me in the way

to raise a thousand pounds," replied lady Belmont.

"Why, that might very easily be done," said Mrs. Marlowe, "if your ladyship would follow the plan of the duchess of Darewell."

"You shall tell me that plan to-morrow," replied lady Belmont; "I am tired now, and sleepy—I shall 'dream of winning thousands, and wake not worth a single guinea.' But to-morrow, Marlowe," continued she, "to-morrow you shall tell me the duchess of Darewell's plan, which, if practicable, I shall be glad enough to adopt, for those debts of honour, and that tiresome old Frenchwoman, drive me almost out of my wits."

Sir William Belmont had not yet been married five months, and his wife had already contrived to get rid of double as many thousand pounds. He had remonstrated against her unbounded extravagance in vain; his mild and prudent representation, that his fortune was by no means equal to her expenditure, had only provoked from her ladyship unbecoming re-

plies, expressing the utmost ridicule and contempt of what she termed his meanness and parsimony. Wounding as were her unjust accusations, sir William, with exemplary gentleness, yet at the same time with decisive firmness, insisted upon a reform in her ladyship's conduct; he expressed his utter disapprobation of the acquaintance she had formed with captain Mervin, a man notorious for intrigue and dissolute principles; he also forbade her intimacy with lady Pelham, whose house had become the resort of all the fashionable gamblers, male and female, in the metropolis. But as he found that his injunctions were totally disregarded, he determined to be a spectator of her ladyship's conduct, and judge himself whether or not report was too severe upon her indiscretions. Having perceived her familiarity with captain Mervin, whose designs were glaringly evident, and finding the mania of gambling had taken firm hold of her weak mind, sir William resolved, though it cost his feeling and generous heart many severe pangs, to separate himself from her before

she involved his fortune, which he foresaw must inevitably be the case, unless he put an immediate stop to her thoughtless career. To his infinite regret, sir William Belmont, before he had been a month married, discovered that his title and fortune had been the sole inducements of Miss Walsingham when she gave him her hand—love had not the most trifling share in the engagement: for his person, it was clear she had neither the esteem nor the respect necessary to the preservation of her character, for report was not scrupulous in asserting that captain Mervin obtained infinitely more of her attention than she condescended to bestow on her husband, whose affection and kindness it was but too probable she would reward with disgrace and ruin.

Captain Walsingham had not been a silent or unmoved spectator of his sister's imprudent conduct—he had beheld her levity and extravagance with avowed disapprobation; for though he had contrived to get rid of most of his own morality since his arrival in town, and had suf-

ferred his fashionable acquaintance to initiate him in various expensive dissipations, he was far from allowing the same latitude to females. But as his philippics had wrought no change in lady Belmont's conduct, and as he was no stranger to the various extravagances she had plunged into, the large sums she had lost at the faro-table, together with the loud whispers of scandal against her behaviour to her husband, who had raised her to rank and fortune, and her glaring partiality for captain Mervin, he was not much surprised when sir William Belmont, having, with great agitation, detailed to himself and Miss Claymoor his various causes of discontent, made known to them his settled intention of separating for ever from lady Belmont, and allowing her a maintenance of five hundred pounds a-year, as he found his rational scheme of domestic happiness entirely defeated—"But though my hopes of conjugal felicity," said sir William, "are cruelly disappointed, and my peace of mind is destroyed, I am determined to prevent this

deluded woman from disgracing my name and ruining my fortune."

Against the arrangement of sir William Belmont captain Walsingham had no argument to oppose—to justify, or even palliate, the conduct of his sister was utterly impossible; he only suggested, that it was his wish that lady Belmont should be obliged to reside in the country, as the most prudent means to withdraw and wean her from the vices she had fallen into.

Miss Claymoor, though equally sensible of lady Belmont's imprudences, yet felt greatly shocked to learn sir William's determination to part from his wife, and very reluctantly consented, at captain Walsingham's particular request, to be the bearer of what she was convinced would be very unexpected and unwelcome intelligence to lady Belmont.

It was near noon the following day, when her ladyship left her pillow; and, while sipping her chocolate, she demanded from Mrs. Marlowe the duchess of Darewell's plan to raise money. At first view of the plan, as narrated by her waiting-woman,

man, she was startled, considering it not only difficult but dangerous; but her scruples being lulled by the sophistry of Mrs. Marlowe, who was to have twenty guineas for managing the business, she consented to try its practicability.

She had just settled to adopt the duchess of Darewell's plan, when Miss Claymoor tapped at the door of her dressing-room. Lady Belmont, though in reality dreading sir William's displeasure and resentment, resolved not to appear intimidated, or to allow that she had gone greater lengths than fashion authorized, and was every day practised by persons of rank. Not advert-
ing to the adventure of the last night, with even more than her usual gaiety she rallied Miss Claymoor on her city visit, inquired how they spent their evenings on the other side Temple-bar—whether they played at Pope Joan with halfpence, or at whist for sixpence the rubber?

“However much you may ridicule the sober prudent manners of the city,” replied Miss Claymoor, “I most sincerely wish, Maria, your unfortunate love of

play had never led you the imprudent lengths it has."

"That is, in plain English," replied her ladyship, "you wish I had won instead of lost, as in that case I should have avoided being your debtor. Well, have patience—in a few days, I trust, I shall be able to pay you all I have borrowed."

"Believe me," said Miss Claymoor, "your debt to me was not in my thoughts, but I am seriously concerned——"

"Not for me, I hope," interrupted lady Belmont; "for that would imply that you considered my case desperate."

"How can I consider it otherwise," returned Miss Claymoor, "when I have just heard your brother say——"

"Oh, pray spare me the fatigue of hearing his wise sayings," replied her ladyship; "I was sufficiently wearied with them before I married, and am now less than ever disposed to listen to his observations. Marlowe, order the chariot—I shall make my own calls this morning."

Mrs. Marlowe was preparing to obey her lady's command, when sir William

Belmont and captain Walsingham entered the dressing-room—"Stay where you are," said sir William; "you have frequently witnessed your lady's extravagance—stay now, and hear my determination."

Lady Belmont turned red and pale alternately—"This is very extraordinary conduct, I think, sir," said her ladyship, "and I desire Marlowe may be allowed to order the carriage for me: I suppose you do not intend to make me a prisoner?"

"No," replied sir William; "I come, Maria, to give you the freedom you are so desirous of; for, after the shameful conduct I witnessed last night——"

"Yes," interrupted lady Belmont, "you condescended to act the part of a spy—you meanly followed me to lady Pelham's, to watch how many of your darling guineas I should lose at faro. I do not wonder I was so unlucky, when you, like the demon of disappointment, were muttering spells of ill luck."

"Profligate woman!" replied sir William; "I followed you, not only to prevent the destruction of my fortune, but

the ruin of your fame—I followed to save you from the designs of that villain Mervin."

"Captain Mervin," said her ladyship, "is a gentleman, and has given many proofs of his courage."

"Yes," rejoined captain Walsingham, "he fights duels, games, and intrigues—if these are the attributes of a gentleman, his title is indisputable. But allow me to observe, lady Belmont, that captain Mervin is a gentleman whose character I hold in such absolute contempt, that I consider it disgraceful in a female of my family to acknowledge his acquaintance."

"Your sister, sir," returned lady Belmont, with much acrimony, "will never consult your opinion respecting her acquaintance, considering herself at years of discretion, and quite competent to judge for herself without any officious interference of yours; and permit me further to remark, captain Walsingham, that it is not very brotherly conduct in you to foment a disagreement between sir William and me."

“ Hold, madam,” said sir William, “ do not waste your spirits—you will need them ; and since I am the chief sufferer by your imprudence, you cannot dispute my right to observe that your choice of associates, and the follies (to give them no harsher name) they have led you into, are sufficient proof of the fallacy of your judgment.” Lady Belmont cast a look of contempt on her husband, who continued to say—“ When I married you, I was persuaded you had an affection for me, for so you artfully taught me to believe ; I persuaded myself I had selected for my wife an innocent girl, with prudence to use, not waste my fortune, and in whose keeping my honour would suffer no disgrace. How dreadfully I have been deceived is not confined to the knowledge of my own family—the world at large are witnesses of the turpitude of your behaviour. Instead of an engaging companion and affectionate wife, I find myself united to a being, heartless and unfeeling. But since I discover my person despised in your regard, and that the revenue of a kingdom

would be too little for your extravagance—since I discover that you are so unprincipled as to herd with, and are yourself a gamester, making no scruple to place your virtue in an equivocal and suspicious light, by borrowing money of a man notorious for licentious pursuits and dissolute principles, I am resolved not to stand tamely by, a subservient tool, a wittol husband.”

“Your language, sir,” returned lady Belmont, “is extremely delicate, I must confess; but have a care—undeserved suspicion may provoke me to revenge.”

“That menace,” replied sir William, “only meets my scorn. Your brother and this young lady, still your friend, though you but little merit her regard, are already apprized of my intentions respecting you. I have provided for your maintenance, but the state and splendour you have assumed is at an end—the carriage that has conveyed you to scenes of riot and dissipation you enter no more.”

Lady Belmont turned pale, and leaning back in her chair, faintly asked—“What do you mean, sir William?”

“That we part for ever,” replied he. “I have settled on you five hundred pounds a-year, provided you reside in the country.”

“Yes,” said captain Walsingham, “in the country, Maria, where there are no faro-tables.”

Lady Belmont heard no more, for this was a stroke so unexpected that it quite overcame her spirits, and she fainted. Mrs. Marlowe, who had stood biting her nails in a corner of the room, now flew to help Miss Claymoor to support her lady.—“Here is a pretty job!” said she, addressing sir William; “I should not wonder if my lady is dead—her *situation* ought to have been considered.”

“Her situation!” repeated sir William; “what does the woman mean?”

“Why, dear me, sir!” replied the waiting-woman, “do not you know that my lady is in the family way? and now you may lose your heir and your lady both at once.”

“Are you sure of what you say?” questioned sir William.

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Marlowe, "as sure as that I am a Christian woman."

"She recovers," said Miss Claymoor.

"Take every care of her," resumed sir William, in much agitation. "Come with me, Walsingham, that we may send instantly for a physician."

Lady Belmont was put to bed; and when the medical gentleman arrived, he strongly recommended quiet, and that her ladyship's mind should be kept as tranquil as possible.

Sir William Belmont had openly expressed to his lady, on their first arrival in town, his utter dislike of late hours, and engaging in what is called fashionable life; but the society to which lady Belmont got introduced soon taught her a different lesson. The men flattered her vanity by their adulative praises of her person, and the women ridiculed the deference she professed to pay to sir William's opinions and wishes, till, ashamed of being thought a submissive obedient wife, she burst the restraint imposed by propriety, and dashed at once into all the folly and dissipation

of a town life. Finding herself likely to become a mother, she carefully concealed her situation from sir William, who was passionately fond of children, lest he should actually prevent her racketting about, and deter her from turning night into day.

But though lady Belmont was much mortified and chagrined at the determination of sir William, seeing, in their separation, the end of all her schemes of splendour and notoriety, yet her heart felt no sorrow for the pain she gave a worthy husband, from whom to separate for ever would have occasioned her no grief, provided she could have enjoyed his fortune unrestricted and unrestrained. But as she found this could not be, and not at all relishing a country life, or being obliged to limit her expences to the narrow income of five hundred pounds a-year, she artfully resolved to avail herself of her situation to make her peace with sir William; and bribing her physician with a ring of some value, she told him as much of their present disagreements as was necessary for her

purpose, and engaged him to represent her as being in a state of extreme danger.

To Miss Claymoor she declared she was certain she had not long to live, that the shock she received in sir William's severe determination to part had occasioned internal pangs that would destroy her.—“Yes,” said she, “Charlotte,” faintly pressing her hand, “sir William will very shortly be released from his erring wife, and his innocent child will die with its unfortunate mother.”

The resentment of sir William Belmont expired before the representations of the physician, who having received his instructions from the lady, declared that some very serious uneasiness lay on the mind of his patient, which, if not speedily removed, would be attended with consequences most fatal; but if the mind of lady Belmont could be set at ease, there was no doubt but with proper care both her life and that of her infant might be preserved.

Miss Claymoor, being present when this opinion was given, flew to the bedside of lady Belmont, and tenderly embracing her,

placed in her hand the acknowledgment she had given for the monies with which, at different times, Miss Claymoor had supplied her.—“Burn that paper, my dear Maria,” said Miss Claymoor, “I have already torn it; if the remembrance of that debt presses on your mind, let it perish; I am sufficiently rich, and can afford to make that offering to friendship.”

Lady Belmont affected to weep, and would have returned the paper, saying, it was fit sir William should be acquainted with the full extent of her imprudence—that she could on no account think of her friend being the loser of such a large sum of money—and that, should sir William even reproach her more severely than he had already done, she must confess that his provocation would justify him, though the punishment inflicted by his resentment was terrible to her idea, who was too late convinced she had with her own hand rashly dashed happiness aside.

Miss Claymoor threw the paper on the fire, which in an instant was consumed to ashes.—“Thus sensible of your errors, my

dear Maria," said Miss Claymoor, "I trust you will recover, and by pursuing a more prudent path, find the happiness you lament."

"My husband hates me," replied lady Belmont; "he will never be reconciled to me, and I shall die unblest by his forgiveness!"

"Sir William is too good a Christian," returned Miss Claymoor, "to refuse pardon to such sincere penitence; and I am certain the idea of your illness terminating in the melancholy way you speak of would be very afflicting to his feelings, who I am certain loved you with a most true affection."

"I am conscious," said lady Belmont, "I do not merit his regard—I see my ingratitude and my folly—Yes, the reproaches of my heart are more painful than my illness! Plead for me, my dear Charlotte—tell sir William that I am convinced I shall not linger long—he will soon be released from an imprudent wife; but say also, that I cannot die in peace, while I know myself an object of his displeasure.

Plead for me, my friend—entreat him to pardon my errors—to be reconciled to her who will never offend again!"

This pathetic acknowledgment of her faults and imprudences deeply affected Miss Claymoor, who, weeping over the pretended penitent, consoled her with the promise of instantly seeking sir William, and employing all her rhetoric to bring about a reconciliation between them.

Nor was this a difficult task: the situation of lady Belmont had awakened all the tenderness of sir William's heart; he listened to Miss Claymoor's account of his wife's contrition for past offences with tearful attention, and flew to her bedside, to assure her that she was forgiven, and to entreat her to live for his sake, and the sake of their unborn infant.

Lady Belmont, weak and faint, thanked sir William for his great goodness, of which she knew herself totally unworthy; but though she had been, by the force of example, led into thoughtless extravagance, she protested she was entirely innocent with respect to captain Mervin, of whose

improper designs she had never entertained a suspicion.

Sir William, happy at the prospect of being a father, believed all, forgave all, and tenderly entreated she would compose her spirits, and only think of recovering her health, as she might rest assured the past should never be repeated, to distress her feelings, but should be consigned to oblivion.

Sir William and Miss Claymoor had no sooner left the chamber, than lady Belmont burst into a loud laugh, in which she was joined by Mrs. Marlowe.—“ You see,” said her ladyship, “ how easy it is to dupe and impose upon these men : with all their boasted strength of mind and superior understanding, they are at best but fools, when a woman chooses to exert her wit against them.”

“ But your ladyship has such extraordinary wit,” replied the obsequious waiting-woman, “ that it is no wonder sir William——” “ is imposed upon,” she was going to say, but recollecting herself in time, she

added—"yields to your ladyship's understanding."

"Yet my wit was but short, Marlowe," said lady Belmont, "or, when I found sir William in such a forgiving humour, I ought to have told him the full extent of my debts, the worst of which I consider the five hundred pounds I owe to captain Mervin, and that old witch, madame Laval's bill, which amounts to three hundred and ninety-seven pounds more. Oh dear! dear! I was very much wanting in wit that I did not seize the favourable moment, and confess all my embarrassments, while sir William's generous fit lasted! I shall now be compelled to adopt the plan we talked of, though with extreme reluctance, I confess, for I fear I shall not succeed in it like the duchess of Darewell."

During the period lady Belmont chose to confine herself to her chamber, Miss Duncan called twice, and was happy to find that the report in circulation respecting the jealousy of sir William, and the projected separation between him and his

lady, were mere fabrications, as the most perfect harmony appeared to subsist between them.

Speaking on the subject to the countess of Deveron, she replied, that newspaper reports were very little to be relied on, and that scandalous stories were too frequently invented, out of a paltry revenge for some imaginary injury, or from an equally contemptible envy of superior beauty, accomplishments, or good-fortune.

Sir William was much pleased to see the prospect of renewed intimacy between his wife and Miss Duncan, whose character he admired and respected; he also hoped that, through her, the countess of Deveron might honour his lady with her notice, and introduce her to a circle who made propriety the rule of their actions.

Miss Nelthorpe was also a frequent visitor to the sick-chamber; but though evidently a favourite of lady Belmont's, she failed to conciliate the esteem of sir William, to whom her affectation, her vanity, and levity, were disgusting; but fearful of agitating the weak nerves of his

wife, sir William expressed no dislike of Miss Nelthorpe, though the reserve of his behaviour evidently spoke his disapproval of her freedom.

The convalescence of lady Belmont was followed by the patent of nobility, obtained by Miss Claymoor for captain Walsingham, who, to the great envy and vexation of his sister, became earl of Thornberry. An elegant mansion in St. James's-square, and superb equipages, were soon in readiness, and Miss Claymoor laid aside her mourning robes, to become countess of Thornberry.

While partaking of the nuptial festivities, lady Belmont severely condemned herself for having so often pointed out to her brother the partiality of Miss Claymoor; and when returned from paying the bridal visits, she constantly exclaimed to Marlowe—"Who ever would have thought that demure ugly little Creole would have had so much ambition? who ever would have dreamed of seeing that dingy thing a countess?"

“ Who indeed, my lady !” returned the waiting-woman ; “ but, there, money will do any thing.”

“ It will indeed,” said lady Belmont, with a heavy sigh.

“ It is really vexatious and provoking though, that her purchased nobility will oblige me to allow her place and precedence wherever we may chance to meet.”

Though married to so much wealth, lord Thornberry felt but little gratitude towards the bestower ; and having made him master of her fortune, there was but one more favour he was solicitous of, and that was, that she would add to all his other obligations by making him a widower ; but as lady Thornberry enjoyed very good health, there was little prospect of his being indulged in that wish, which, though extremely unlikely to be obtained, was not the less fervently desired ; for, though robed in velvet, and glittering with diamonds, his wife was still a dingy, plain-looking, little body, while Alexina Duncan, dressed with the utmost simplicity, and owing nothing to ornament, was love-

liness itself, and, contrasted with lady Thornberry, appeared, in his eyes, more beautiful than ever.

Having been acquainted with the Walsinghams from her earliest remembrance, and having always considered them her friends, Alexina felt much pleasure in their society. With lady Belmont and lord Thornberry she could talk of Northumberland, of her beloved father, and of the pleasure she derived from his letters, always full of instruction as well as entertainment.

All this lady Belmont considered very wearying: Miss Duncan had never been a favourite of hers, for in their school days she had been pointed out as an example for her companions to copy; as they attained the age of womanhood, she had considered her in the light of a rival; and now, the beauty of Miss Duncan, and her extreme modesty and discretion, were so universally spoken of and extolled, that it was quite disgusting—lady Belmont hated saints, particularly beautiful ones, for their conduct was a reproach to her own.

Neither was the mind of lady Thornberry exactly tranquil: though yet a bride, she experienced something very like jealousy, as she beheld the eyes of her lord dwelling with admiration on Miss Duncan, and seeming to devour every word that fell from her ruby lips. It was true that she had nothing to complain of, in the behaviour of Miss Duncan, who certainly did not appear to court the notice of lord Thornberry; she had also heard the report of the attachment subsisting between her and lord Ellesmere—nay, she had even fancied she could read in their looks and manner towards each other their mutual regard; but yet it was mortifying to her pride, as well as wounding to her affection, to see her husband so evidently enamoured of another, at so early a period of their marriage, particularly when common gratitude ought to have rendered him faithful to her, who had raised him to a rank, and bestowed on him a fortune, beyond his most sanguine expectations.

Since their arrival in London, lady Honoria Egerton seemed to be restored, in

some degree, to the favour of her mother, who lamented much not having seen her son before his departure from England, particularly when she read in the papers an account of a battle, in which he had conducted himself with much bravery, and though exposed to imminent danger, had escaped without a wound.

Having read the paragraph, with much proud satisfaction, to lady Honoria, she folded the paper together, and said—“Though Adolphus has forgot the duty of a son, I cannot help feeling that I am his mother, and exulting in his successes. I trembled with apprehension lest he should have been persuaded by that girl—that Miss Nelthorpe, to resign his commission; but, thank Heaven! he has pursued the path of honour—the blood of the illustrious Eastbrooks and Ellesmeres circles in his veins—my boy will not disgrace his noble ancestors, among whom were many valiant chieftains and warriors.”

Lady Honoria was tenderly attached to her brother, and her heart exulted, and her blue eyes filled with tears of sensibili-

ty, as the countess spoke of him, and with an affection which she had so long seemed to have forgotten. But though delighted to find that her brother had so honourably distinguished himself, she was extremely anxious to learn if no mention was made of her beloved Horace; but not daring to ask any questions on that interdicted subject, she took an opportunity, on the entrance of some visitors, to slide the newspaper from the table; and while her mother was listening to a long history, told by an old dowager, of a robbery that had been committed in her neighbourhood by some daring villains, who had eaten the remains of a cold turkey and tongue, and drank out two bottles of wine, and then wrote, with the smoke of a candle, on the ceiling, "the thieves have done this," she contrived to satisfy her curiosity, and found that captain Winterthorn had evinced his bravery by obtaining a standard from the enemy, for which he had fought with a courage which had gained him the respect and adoration of the regiment, which his valorous example had led to

perform wonders ; it also said, that he had preserved the life of his general, who was wounded in his sword arm, and that he had singly cut a passage through the enemy's ranks, and placed his officer in safety.

Lady Honoria did not dare to utter the exulting sentiments that swelled her heart ; but she thought of the venerable father of her lover, and the triumph he would feel while reading of the intrepid conduct of his son.

She had scarcely restored the paper to the table, when the countess of Eastbrook reminded her that they were engaged to attend lady Susan Monkton's morning concert, where they were to hear the extraordinary performances of signor Squallietto, whose vocal powers drew after him all the musical amateurs in the fashionable world.

Lady Honoria would gladly have absented herself from this concert, for she wanted to talk over the valorous achievements of her lover with dear Mrs. Euston, and to answer his last letter, in which

he had tenderly concealed from her that they were, even at the moment of his writing, preparing to engage the enemy ; but the countess of Eastbrook made a point of her hearing the Italian, and she was obliged to attend her.

They found the rooms crowded with persons of distinction, among whom were lady Deveron, Miss Duncan, and lord Ellesmere, whom the countess of Eastbrook instantly joined ; and while some of the first people in the kingdom were paying their compliments to the sallow mean-looking signor Squallietto, lady Honoria was receiving the congratulations of Miss Duncan, and her cousin, lord Ellesmere, on the glorious news from the continent, where her brother and her lover had already wreathed their brows with laurels.

Among the gentlemen who crowded round Miss Duncan and lady Honoria Egerton were lord Henry Villars and captain Mervin ; the former of whom being known to lady Honoria, soon obtained the introduction he wished to Miss Duncan, whose beauty, he confessed, well merited

the appellation it had obtained—she was indeed a peerless rose; but her manners, though extremely elegant, repressed every approach to familiarity.

Captain Mervin also beheld the *Rose of Hexham* with eyes of admiration; but not being at all acquainted with any of her party, he was necessitated to gaze in silence.

About the middle of the concert, lord and lady Thornberry, and sir William and lady Belmont, arrived, much to the annoyance of lady Susan Monkton, whose eyes and ears were entranced by signor Squallietto, who she declared was “an enchanting—a divine creature!”

“Why, ’pon my soul! I believe lady Susan is in love with this squeaking fellow,” said lord Henry Villars.

“He sings very finely,” said the countess of Eastbrook.

“I really think,” observed lady Percival, “we do wrong to give such encouragement to these foreigners: this signor Squallietto is to have no less than a hundred guineas for singing at this concert—money very ill

bestowed, in my opinion, who have, I confess, no great taste for these shakes and quavers."

"Your ladyship does not understand music, I suppose?" said lord Henry Villars.

"Not sufficiently to be enchanted with signor Squallietto," replied lady Percival; "nor am I sufficiently fond of minims and crotchets to pay fifty guineas a lesson to have my daughters taught by this Italian."

"Why, is any person likely to commit such an extravagance?" asked the countess of Eastbrook.

"Oh yes," returned lady Percival; "the marchioness of Dunegan has engaged him to give her silly daughter, lady Felicia, lessons."

"I should not wonder," said lord Henry Villars, "if lady Felicia were to fall in love with him, and marry him."

"Marry signor Squallietto! You must have a poor opinion of the young lady's taste," observed lady Honoria.

"Oh, 'pon my soul!" said lord Henry Villars, "I merely do her justice; she was

desperately in love with her dancing-master, and would have eloped with him, if a treacherous servant had not betrayed the affair to the marquis. Her mother proposed her for a wife for me, but, 'pon my soul! I begged permission to decline the honour—lady Felicia has too much susceptibility for me.”

With all the ease and confidence of a person utterly unconscious of any sinister design, or seductive intention, captain Mervin approached lord Thornberry's party, bowing and smiling.

Lady Belmont coloured highly, not only from the remembrance of having given him more encouragement than became a married woman, but from the fear that, resenting sir William's behaviour to him at lady Pelham's, he would now remind her of the money she had so imprudently borrowed of him; and, impressed with this mortifying idea, she alone, of all her party, thought it necessary to treat him with affability, while the rest replied to his compliments and inquiries in a way that would have convinced any person,

not wilfully blind, that his presence was considered an intrusion.

Lady Thornberry, in a loud whisper, wondered at the man's assurance, and declared he was a person whom she never at all liked.

Sir William Belmont perceived that his wife was much agitated; but the real cause never entered his imagination, for being by her protestations entirely cured of jealous suspicion, he supposed she blushed from the recollection of what took place at lady Pelham's; he was sorry that the intrusion of captain Mervin had renewed on her mind the unpleasant circumstance, but as he knew the story had been much exaggerated, as well as misrepresented, he considered it prudent, for the safety of lady Belmont's reputation, to behave with politeness to the man who had occasioned him so much uneasiness, though he resolved at once to put an end to an intimacy he could not approve.

For the sake of appearances, he was civil, though reserved, while lord Thornberry actually turned his back on the un-

daunted captain, who continued to chat with lady Belmont, to whom his conversation, at that moment, was distressing in the extreme ; and while this scene was acting, not all the scientific shakes and warblings of signor Squallietto and his assistants could fix the attention of the company, who had assembled for the express purpose of doing him honour, and paying respect to his patroness, lady Susan Monkton.

It had been reported, in all the fashionable circles, that sir William Belmont was extremely jealous of captain Mervin, and now they were curious to learn whether rumour had spoken truly of the affair ; but there was nothing in the look of sir William to confirm the story, and all that could possibly lend it the air of confirmation was the blush and the embarrassment of lady Belmont, who, lady Percival, seldom inclined to think favourably of her own sex, said, in her opinion, looked extremely conscious and guilty.

“ Guilty of what ? ” asked lord Henry Villars, laughing ; “ would your ladyship

insinuate that she looks as if she had been guilty of a little harmless flirtation with captain Mervin, who is, I understand, a prodigious favourite with the ladies?"

Lady Percival replied—"That is more than you can boast of, you impertinent creature!"

"'Pon my soul, though," resumed lord Henry Villars, "if she is as guilty as you believe, her excuse stands before her—only look at sir William Belmont."

"Certainly," observed the countess of Deveron, "sir William Belmont cannot be called a handsome man, but then he has far better qualities to engage the respect and affection of a wife than mere personal beauty, which, in the estimation of a woman of sense, is but a secondary consideration. Sir William Belmont is allowed to be a man of good understanding; he has the character of being humane and generous, and report speaks him entirely free from the vices and follies that disgrace too many of the young men of the present day; besides, it is extremely improbable that lady Belmont would be indiscreet

with captain Mervin, when it is remembered that she was brought up with sir William, and that her marriage with him must have been the actual result of affection, founded on a thorough knowledge of his excellent disposition and noble qualities: for my own part, I am disposed to believe that lady Belmont's blushes and embarrassment do not proceed from guilt, but innocence."

"Well," replied lady Percival, "if she is not guilty of infidelity, all the world knows that she has lost large sums of money at lady Pelham's faro-table; and even the best friends of lady Belmont cannot vindicate her conduct there, or say she is innocent of gambling."

"Yet even there," said lady Deveron, "much may be said to palliate her errors. She is young and inexperienced, and on her *entrée* into fashionable life, she was seduced into following the example of her acquaintance—not, perhaps, from a love of play, but from the dread of being ridiculed as a country girl, afraid of her own shadow; being unsuccessful, she hoped to

retrieve her losses; and I am pleased to hear that sir William has considered the affair as a youthful error, and that lady Belmont's ill success has entirely cured her of a propensity for play."

"What prosing! it is quite a bore, 'pon my soul!" whispered lord Henry Villars to lady Percival, who, taking his arm, said—"Come, Hal, let us get nearer the singers."

Lady Belmont's late adventure at lady Pelham's seemed to occupy so much of the attention of the company, who were all conversing on the subject, that lady Susan Monkton threw on them many indignant glances, much offended that any circumstance or object should engage them in conversation, while her favourite poured forth the melodious strains—the entrancing melody, that threw her into ecstasies, and thrilled her frame, even, as she said, to her fingers' ends.

But if lady Susan considered the low whisperings of the ladies Deveron and Eastbrook, and their friends, an affront to the wonderful abilities of signor

Squallietto, she was rendered almost frantic by the loud voice of Miss Nelthorpe, who, having taken the arm of lady Belmont, was detailing at large the account given in the newspapers of the valorous exploits of lord Eastbrook, in the late engagement with the enemy.

All eyes were turned on the young lady, who, nothing abashed by the general notice she excited, protested the glorious news had made her almost frantic with joy.—“Only conceive, my dear friends,” said she, “the rapturous delight I must feel, to hear of a victory obtained by my lover! how I must exult in my hero!”

“In your hero!” repeated lord Thornberry; “in the nation’s hero, I suppose you mean, ma’am?”

“I mean no such thing,” resumed Miss Nelthorpe; “I beg to assure your lordship I mean exactly as I say—my hero! and certainly I may be allowed to speak thus particularly, when the public so well understand the engagement subsisting between the earl of Eastbrook and myself?”

“ I crave your pardon, Miss Nelthorpe,” returned lord Thornberry ; “ but, as one of the public, I beg leave to observe, this is the first time I ever heard of any serious engagement between lord Eastbrook and yourself.”

“ Astonishing !” exclaimed Miss Nelthorpe ; “ I am really surprised to hear you profess yourself ignorant of an affair that has engaged so much the attention of the public, and occasioned so much conversation. I had no secrets from my friend lady Belmont ; she knew the whole circumstance, and witnessed the affecting scene of our parting—she heard his pathetic adieu, and witnessed his vows of everlasting truth.”

Sir William Belmont, though ashamed of her folly, could not restrain a smile ; while lord Thornberry said—“ Really ! and so you, lady Belmont, are the confidant in this love affair ?”

“ Yes,” replied lady Belmont, “ lord Eastbrook himself told me he hoped to receive Miss Nelthorpe’s fair hand as the

reward of the dangers he was going to encounter in a foreign land."

The countess of Eastbrook was compelled to hear this, to her, most disagreeable conversation; for she was so stationed that it was quite impossible for her to remove, on account of the crowd, which pressed forward to the upper part of the room—not indeed to hear the Italian sing, but to have what they called a delightful squeeze, and elbow each other.

The countess of Deveron, with her usual consideration, endeavoured to engage the attention of lady Eastbrook from Miss Nelthorpe, but it was utterly impossible, for, in a voice which she determined should be heard, the young lady continued to say—"Then there is that other divine fellow!"

"What?" said captain Mervin, who yet continued with the party, "have you another hero?"

"No," replied Miss Nelthorpe—"captain Winterthorn is lady Honoria Egerton's hero. The general, in his dispatches,

has spoken of him in the highest terms of praise."

"Yes, I read the account," said lord Thornberry, "in the Gazette Extraordinary. 'Full well he has fleshed his maiden sword.' Captain Winterthorn has proved himself a brave young man, and all his friends will rejoice to hear that he gains promotion."

Miss Nelthorpe's speech had turned many inquisitive eyes on lady Honoria, who felt much confused at being thus publicly pointed out, though she would, in any other situation, have been delighted to listen to the just tribute of praise bestowed on the bravery of her beloved Horace.

Not so the haughty countess, her mother, who, with an expression of strong indignation on her countenance, was compelled to listen to what she considered the utmost stretch of insolence on the part of Miss Nelthorpe, to drown whose impertinent loquacity she began encoring, before it was near concluded, a famous duet, that signor Squallietto and madame Friskoni

were singing, in the first style of musical excellence, as lady Susan Monkton declared, when this barbarous, this Gothic interruption took place.

This mistake, as it was generally conceived, of the countess of Eastbrook's, produced a loud and universal laugh, in which she, though far from being in good-humour, joined, to the very great displeasure of the Italian, who, throwing down a pile of music-books, descended precipitately from his elevated station, and, in an angry tone, declared, if an immediate apology was not made to him, he would not sing another note.

Lady Susan Monkton, as far as the polite remembrance that she was in her own house would admit, took part with the enraged Italian; but the presumption and arrogance of the opera-singer, and the high airs of madame Friskoni, met with general and decided disapprobation.

A scene of noise and confusion ensued, in which discord gained a complete victory over harmony; and if signor Squallietto had not prudently made a hasty retreat to

his carriage, it is probable he would have been compelled to accept a severe caning, in lieu of the apology he so loudly and insolently demanded.

Lady Eastbrook and her party made many efforts to retire, but the crowd was so immense, that she was obliged to remain; and, to her extreme discontent and vexation, she again perceived Miss Nelthorpe close by her side, who was yet pursuing, with untired volubility, the subject of her expectation of being made countess of Eastbrook, as soon as her hero returned to England.

The contemptuous glances of lady Eastbrook, not sparingly shot from her eyes, had not the effect of at all abashing, or putting Miss Nelthorpe to silence; for, addressing lady Honoria Egerton with all the freedom of allowed intimacy, she said —“ What a glorious triumph is ours, dear lady Honoria! an exulting, heartfelt delight, that no pride, no parental frown can deprive us of! Permit me, who am deeply interested, warmly and sincerely to congratulate you on the brilliant achievements

of your brother and your lover. Surely, after such splendid and honourable testimony of captain Winterthorn's merit, the countess of Eastbrook will no longer object to your union."

Lady Honoria blushed, and felt shocked beyond measure at this most indelicate address, which was made by Miss Nelthorpe with no other view than to mortify lady Eastbrook, whose pride she knew had induced her to conceal from her friends the attachment of her daughter to a young man without rank or fortune, who had no richer possessions than sterling goodness and merit to recommend him.

The countess of Deveron and Miss Duncan pitied lady Honoria, whose confusion had become quite distressing, while the countess of Eastbrook observed, that the insolent familiarity and intrepid assurance of some young women created not only disgust and contempt, but surprise that any young man of rank would put it in their power to mention their names with such impertinent familiarity.

Miss Nelthorpe's reply to this speech was a contemptuous laugh.

Lady Thornberry condemned, in plain and unqualified terms, the boldness and indelicacy of Miss Nelthorpe's behaviour, and declared herself ashamed of being considered one of her party. Even lady Belmont, though she secretly enjoyed the mortification of the stately countess of Eastbrook, felt a little confounded at her friend's effrontery.

Lord Thornberry, who had become quite a man of fashion, and was getting rid, as fast as possible, of all his better feelings, laughed heartily, as did many others, who knew the extreme pride of the countess of Eastbrook; while sir William Belmont resolved, on their return home, to point out to his wife the injury she would do her own character by continuing an intimacy with a person whose French assurance, and unconstrained freedom of manner, was so extremely repugnant to the laws of English decorum.

When seated in her carriage, the countess of Eastbrook gave way to the rage

which she had been so long obliged to restrain, and the storm fell heavily on poor lady Honoria, who was again commanded to think no more of captain Winterthorn. —“ I never,” said the countess, “ passed such a morning, since I was created.”

Lady Honoria wished she had been allowed, as she wished, to remain at home.

“ I wish I had remained at home myself,” replied lady Eastbrook ; “ and if I can find out that any of my friends invite that bold, insolent, Northumberland girl to their houses, they need not expect me to be of the party—I have had quite sufficient of her. It is a pity but your brother had heard her—I think it would have given him a sickening. Make such a creature as that countess of Eastbrook ! Heaven deliver me from ever witnessing such a degradation ! After the exposure of this morning, I expect we shall be finely spoken of in the newspapers, and caricatured in the print-shops—Happy are they who have no children !”

The stopping of the carriage put an end

to these ebullitions of resentment, and released lady Honoria from the painful task of listening to what she considered overweening pride, though she entered into her mother's dislike of Miss Nelthorpe, and wished, as she did, that her brother could have an opportunity of seeing her, as they had, that morning, which she thought would effectually cure him of what she could not help considering a degrading infatuation.

CHAPTER IV.

"To distant lands the wretched stray,
 And hope to leave their woes behind;
 But, ah! what scenes can chase away
 The records of a guilty mind?"

"Nor bow'ry shade, nor breezy hill,
 Delightful to that wretch appears,
 Within whose brain remembrance still
 Recalls dark deeds of other years."

II.

THE journey of the earl of Deveron to Scotland was performed with all the restless rapidity of a mind anxious to develop a circumstance, not only of most peculiar interest to himself, but which combined with its importance a mystery that inflamed his curiosity to a painful degree. But the velocity with which he travelled proved exertion too great for the strength of his emaciated frame and depressed spirits; and, though most unwilling to submit to a moment's delay, he was compelled

to remain more than a week at a small village, in the most dreary part of Aberdeenshire, to recover his fatigues, and enable him to complete a journey, in which he had persevered in defiance of the obstacles opposed by intense cold and bad roads, till rest became necessary to the preservation of his existence.

Wearied, and impatient of the many inconveniences he was constrained to endure at a paltry inn, and disgusted with the dull monotony of an obscure village, he again set forward, and arrived at Aberdeen about noon the following day, where Conrad, his faithful Swiss attendant, used all his rhetoric to persuade him to remain till the next morning; but, impatient to come to the end of his tiresome journey, he persisted in proceeding, and having taken a hasty dinner, he again entered his carriage, though convinced it would be a late hour before he could hope to reach Deveron Castle.

The evening was far advanced, and the pale sickly beams of a winter moon glittered on the snow, that had froze, in fan-

tastic shapes, on the branches of the trees, when the earl's carriage entered on the well-remembered road, cut on the edge of the extensive forest of Mar by the former earls of Deveron, and continued to the top of the hill, on whose brow, in Gothic grandeur, arose the stately turrets of Deveron Castle.

A thousand melancholy and interesting recollections crowded the aching brain, and wrung the heart of the earl, as the wheels rolled beneath the aged oaks, planted along the road, under whose wide spreading boughs he had frequently gambolled, in happy careless childhood, while yet unconscious of the influence of those baneful passions, that time was even then maturing, to the destruction of his health and peace. To his left hand, tranquilly reposing, as it seemed, in the sheltering bosom of the vale, he beheld the white arcaded front of the Wangle Villa, where the innocent persecuted baroness Waldeck had taught her " trials patience," and blunted the keen edge of sorrow with meek resignation and piety—where she had trained

her daughter, the lovely Constance, in the practice of every virtue.

Turning from this object, his eye caught a view of the tree where Leolin lord Roslyn had fallen when he sprained his ancle; it was a gigantic evergreen oak, which proudly displayed its verdure in defiance of the winter storms, and seemed, to the sick fancy of the earl, a flourishing memorial of their first interview with the interesting baroness and her beautiful daughter. The earl sighed deeply and heavily; he averted his eyes, and covering them with his hand, remained in that position, silent and wrapped in melancholy thought, till the carriage stopped before the magnificent portal of Deveron Castle.

The grey-headed domestics, though taken by surprise, crowded to the hall, according to ancient custom, to bid their lord welcome; but waving his hand, and bowing in silence, he passed on to the saloon, where, in the time of the late earl, the family usually sat; but here the affectionate zeal of Maud, the old housekeeper, had hung the portraits of the late earl and

countess of Deveron, and their son, lord Roslyn, over the chimney-piece, and these were objects most unpleasing to the present earl. Advancing to the fire, to warm his shivering limbs, his eyes encountered the resemblance of those beings, whom he had for years laboured to banish from his mind. While he gazed, the lips of the countess seemed to move, as if in the act of addressing him, and her dark eye appeared to turn upon her son. To remain in this room was impossible, and he hastily retreated to the opposite saloon, where an aged hound lay basking his worn-out limbs before the fire.

On the entrance of the earl, the dog set up a hideous howl, and, though old and feeble, would have fastened on him but for the aid of the butler, who being angrily chidden by the earl for not destroying the surly beast, replied, that poor old Ringwood had been a favourite with lord Roslyn, and that, though grown old and useless, yet he was taken care of for the sake of their dear young lord, and no one

had the heart to hurt him, poor, harmless, quiet creature.

“Harmless!” replied the earl; “why, he would have torn a piece out of my arm, only he has no teeth; and in proof of his quietness, hear him now howling and barking.”

“The poor old beast is not used to see strangers,” said the butler.

“I will not be annoyed and disturbed,” replied the earl; “and, remember, it is my command that he is put to death.”

The pictures and the hound did not tend to compose the nerves of the earl, already irritated by the fatigues of a long journey. Having taken a slight refreshment, he desired to be conducted to the apartment prepared for his repose.

Maud, the housekeeper, supposing the earl might have some commands for her, attended herself with the tapers, and lit his lordship up the grand staircase, and through the gallery, wainscotted with black oak, on which the arms and devices of the Deveron family were richly carved.

Silently, with his eyes bent on the

ground, the earl followed the steps of Maud, till she threw open the door of a spacious apartment, magnificently hung with draperies of crimson velvet, from which he started back, remembering it was the very chamber in which the corpse of his uncle, the late earl, had lain in state, previous to its interment.

Maud, with a curtesy, invited him to enter, saying, with much complacency and self-satisfaction—"I have got ready the best apartment in the castle for your lordship, and you may depend I have taken care to see the bed well aired. As for the sheets, they have been laid up in lavender for many a long day, and I warrant your lordship will sleep sweetly and soundly."

"Not under that canopy," replied lord Deveron, recoiling ;—"I shall never sleep on that bed! I do not like this chamber."

"Not like the crimson chamber!" exclaimed Maud, in a tone of surprise ;—"not sleep on that bed! There is not a better in all Scotland ; it is every bit down, and the sheets are of the very finest Holland. Why, the late earl, Heaven give rest to his pre-

cious soul! always slept in this very chamber, during the lifetime of his beautiful lady, your most honoured aunt; and in his last illness, your lordship may remember, he would be removed from the green chamber to this, that he might die, he said, where his dear wife had died; and then, for certain, this is the best and pleasantest apartment in the castle, and you may see from the windows——”

“I do not approve this apartment—I will not sleep here!” said lord Deveron, impatient of the commendations so liberally bestowed by the housekeeper, every one of which were to him objections.

“Oh, very well, just as your lordship pleases for that,” returned Maud, not a little offended at his rejection of the crimson chamber, after she had taken so much pains to prepare it for his reception, “just as your lordship thinks proper: to be sure I thought you would like the crimson chamber; but then what signifies what a simple body like me thinks? Well then,” opening a door on the right hand, “here is lord Roslyn’s chamber—dear lovely

youth! while I am lamenting for him, cut off, as he was, like a spring-flower, he is a saint in heaven!" Maud wiped the tears that started to her eyes with the corner of her cambric apron—"He was so kind, so gentle, and so condescending to his inferiors, that every body loved him, sweet young gentleman! he had not a bit of pride belonging to him—no, truth to say, he was as humble as a beggar, though he was the true and rightful heir to such great possessions. I remember well how proud I used to be, when the countess would trust me to carry the lovely babe. Well-a-day! times are much altered since those days!"

Lord Deveron was so wrapped in his own thoughts, that he had not attended to a single word she uttered.

"I know this chamber is well aired," resumed Maud, "for I very often sleep in the bed myself, in the hope that I may dream of the dear youth, and have the pleasure to see his lovely face in my sleep."

"And have you ever seen him?" demanded the earl, who, roused from his re-

verie, had caught the meaning of her last words.

“No,” replied Maud, shaking her head mournfully, “no; I am growing old, and I sleep heavier, and my imagination is not so strong as when I was young and lusty.”

The earl sighed, and mentally wished his own imagination weakened.

Maud took up an ivory flute, that lay on the table, and carefully wiping it, said—
 “Ah, well-a-day! I remember the very time when the countess brought this flute from Edinburgh; she bought it of a kinsman of my own, one David Graham. Many is the time that lord Roslyn used to play the ‘Yellow-Hair’d Laddie,’ and ‘Corn Rigs are Bonny,’ to please me: he was then a blooming boy, with sparkling eyes, and shining curls on his white forehead; and now, alack!” continued she, weeping bitterly, “he is lying mouldering to dirt, in the dark grave! What a doleful change a few years have made—the young are called away, and the old are spared to lament for them! The castle is become a

sad dismal place, since the merry time when lord Roslyn used to play on this flute, and sleep in that bed ! Sweet youth, I see him now, with his cheek on the pillow !”

Lord Deveron cast a shuddering glance toward the bed, in the horrible expectation of seeing the spectre of lord Roslyn : in a tremulous voice he said—“ I pray you, my good Maud, conduct me to the chamber I occupied when I was last at the castle.”

“ The ceiling of that chamber,” returned Maud, “ fell down only yesterday ; but if your lordship pleases, you can have the late earl’s room, the green chamber.”

“ No, not that—I will not have that apartment,” said the earl, advancing along the gallery ; “ among all the chambers of Deveron Castle, have you none fit for my reception ?”

“ There is the matted-room,” replied Maud, “ where your lordship’s mother, the lady Marian——”

“ Woman, woman !” said the earl, fiercely, “ beware how you torture my feelings !

I will not have the matted chamber—some other instantly !”

Maud trembled as she beheld the dark expression of his countenance, and replied —“ Why, your lordship has been so long away from the castle, and have now arrived so unexpectedly, that but very few of the apartments are in a fit condition to receive you ; for my part, I only thought of preparing the best, for how could I guess your lordship would object to sleeping in the crimson chamber? To be sure, if your lordship has no objection to that, you can have the chamber the countess used to occupy when she was the widow lady.”

“ Peace ! woman, peace ! you weary me : lead then to that apartment,” said the earl, “ and hasten to prepare my bed—I am fatigued, and want rest.”

Maud was herself even more weary than him ; for she thought the earl not only whimsical and crack-brained, but very tiresome and ill-tempered. Carefully closing the door of lord Roslyn’s chamber, she conducted him through an opposite gallery to the other side of the castle, and entered

an anti-room, within which was the bed-chamber where the lovely widowed Constance had given birth to the child of lord Roslyn.

The earl of Deveron had a powerful reason for remembering these apartments; and as he sunk, faint and exhausted, on a couch, the busy occurrences of past days seemed again present to his eyes; again the voices of the absent and the dead rang in his ears, and his heart suffered all the pangs and complicated feelings that had once before assailed it. Making a strong effort to dispel the distressing illusion that had seized his fancy, he rang for his faithful Swiss, with whose assistance the inner chamber was soon prepared, and a small pallet placed beside the earl's bed, for his valet.

While these necessary arrangements were making, lord Deveron sat near a window, which commanded a front view of the Wangle Villa: while his eyes were fixed on it, in mournful gaze, he saw a light stream from the window of the chamber which was formerly appropriated to the re-

pose of the baroness Waldeck.—“ Who inhabits the Wangle Villa?” demanded the earl, of Maud, who staid to assist in arranging the apartment; “ I did not understand that it was tenanted.”

“ Neither is it,” replied Maud; “ it has no tenant, my lord; no one inhabits the villa: the more is the pity, that the beautiful furniture is left for the mice and the moths to devour. The steward had an offer for it upwards of a year ago; but he did not let it, because there was some disagreement about the repairs, and about——”

“ Not inhabited !” resumed the earl, as if doubting her assertion; “ what light then is that I see streaming from the middle window?”

“ Light, my lord!” repeated Maud; “ your lordship must certainly be mistaken, for there can be no light in a house that has not been inhabited since the death of the baroness Waldeck.”

“ Woman!” said the earl, impatiently, “ would you persuade me out of the evidence of my senses? Come hither, and see

the light, and be convinced that some person does reside there."

Maud obeyed, and approached the window where the earl sat; but the light was no longer visible.—"I can see no light," said she; "and possibly your lordship has been deceived by the glimpses of the moon."

In an angry tone lord Deveron dismissed the old housekeeper, who was very glad to retire from his presence, and calling Conrad to his side, they for some time intently watched the Wangle Villa; but no light returning, they retired to bed, the earl resolving, be the weather what it might, the next morning should be devoted to the developement of the mystery that had hurried him from Northumberland, at that inclement season, to the still keener air of Scotland—at a time, too, when his diseased lungs and consumptive frame required the renovating warmth of Italy or the south of France.

Maud, who, in her youthful days, had been the favourite waiting-woman of the countess of Deveron, and for her well-proved integrity, and faithful attachment to

the family, had been promoted to the high office of housekeeper of Deveron Castle, was not a little displeased with the reception herself, as well as the rest of the domestics, had met from the earl on his arrival, after an absence of so many years, when he marched through the midst of them, without so much as bestowing a look or a word upon any one of them; she was also highly offended at his obstinate rejection of the crimson chamber, which she had prepared with her own hands, and indeed at the whole of his pettish and whimsical behaviour, which she did not fail to repeat, with her own comments, when she descended, from her thankless attendance on the earl, to her own apartment.

The steward was displeased at his having ordered the death of Ringwood, the old hound, whom he had sent away from the castle, to a place where he might live and die in peace; and having listened to Maud's account of the earl's behaviour, he said—"Good troth, I remember a pretty many of the unlucky pranks of Archibald

Bruce, that he used to play our young lord: once he pushed him into the pond, and another time he persuaded him to climb to the battlements of the north turret, after a bird's nest; and lord Roslyn, as mild and gentle as a lamb, never complained to his father of any of his tricks, but believed all his artful excuses. Well, well, I never thought to see such times as these!"

"For my part," observed the butler, "I think the de'il himself has lent him a helping hand; for who ever believed they should see Archibald Bruce the lord of Deveron Castle? and, for all that I could guess, by his looks, he does not seem much the happier for having laid his uncle and his cousin in the grave, and gained the heirship to the title and estates."

"I never could bear the sight of him," said Maud. "When he was the honourable Mr. Bruce, I recollect he once offered to bribe me to let him come to my chamber, after the family had retired to rest; he was then an impudent young rake, and I was nearly old enough to be his mother; but

though I was gifted with grace to refuse his grand offers, Janet Greame was close at hand, and, I believe, not so scrupulous, for about the same time she got a mort of fine things, nobody could tell how; and though both she and Maggie Greame strongly denied it, yet I know it was thought by many she would be a mother at the same time lady Roslyn was; yet how she contrived to get rid of her burthen, no one, I believe, can tell, except her old witch of a mother, for she never seemed sick or sorry."

"Her mother is a sad old jade, I believe," said the steward; "but as she used to connive at her daughter's intimacy with him, I suppose the earl will forgive her all she owes him—for not a farthing rent has she paid these eighteen years, for the hut she lives in."

"Ay, ay, she is a deep one," replied Maud; "finely she imposed on the baroness and lady Roslyn, persuading them that her poor girl's size was entirely owing to worms."

"But what, I wonder, has become of Janet?" said the butler.

"Why, after the death of the baroness, she set off to England with a soldier," replied Maud; "and, as I understand, has never been heard of since: to be sure she can be spared from the Wangle, and if she is dead, no hearts will be broke on her account."

"Perhaps the earl can tell where she is to be found," said the butler.

"If lady Roslyn's child had but lived," resumed Maud, "it would have been a happy circumstance for us all; no doubt he would have been brought up at the castle, and the dear baby would have consoled us for the loss of his noble father; but here we are, left all alone, year after year, neither lord nor lady resides with us; and here is the castle falling to decay, and the rich furniture dropping to pieces, and the tenants unemployed, sinking into poverty."

"It is a sad thing indeed," observed the steward, "when noblemen do not reside on their own estates."

“ Then at last comes my lord Deveron,” continued Maud, “ looking as miserable and as gloomy as Cain did, after the murder of his brother Abel, and starting and staring as if his conscience was sore, and troubled him, speaking to no one but his Swiss valet, and behaving as stately, forsooth, as if he thought his domestics were not made of as good flesh and blood as himself.”

“ True, Maud, true,” replied the butler; “ this is a woeful change, since the days when the earl and the countess would take the trouble to look into all our affairs, and after every little absence had a smile and a kind word, and a little encouraging present for each of us : those good old times, Maud, are gone past, and we are grown old too, and must never expect to see them return.”

“ Does the earl intend remaining at the castle, I wonder?—Where has he left the countess?” said the steward : “ she, unhappy lady, will never, I suppose, visit Deveron Castle again.”

“ Had lord Roslyn lived,” returned

Maud, "they would have been the handsomest couple in all Scotland—But well-a-day! he is gone, and she, sweet lady, has never known happiness since she heard of his death. It is well known she never liked Archibald Bruce, and only married him out of obedience to the will of the old earl, and duty to her mother. Many a time I have seen her stand before the picture of lord Roslyn, in the state hall, and weep—No, no, poor lady, Deveron Castle is too full of sorrowful remembrances for her to come hither; and no doubt she is glad to get rid of the earl for a while, he being so full of vagaries and strange fancies, that I warrant you he leads her but an uneasy sort of life."

The following morning was dark and cloudy, and a thick drizzling rain fell, which melting the snow that had covered the ground, rendered the road leading from the castle deep and miry; but the uncomfortable aspect of the weather did not alter the purpose of lord Deveron, who having hurried breakfast over, ordered his horse,

and wrapping himself in a fur cloak, pursued his way, unattended, to the forest of Mar.

Unable to pass the evergreen oak, he stopped beneath its branches, and with extreme astonishment beheld the names of "Leolin and Constance," newly cut in the bark.—"Can this be witchcraft?" said the earl, starting; "for who can have done this? who, apprized of my arrival, has thus early set about the work of torturing my feelings? Leolin and Constance!" continued he, mournfully—"Oh, would your persons had never been divided! What years of horror, what agony of mind should I have escaped! But let me hasten to atone in part, if yet atonement may be made."

The rain now began to fall heavier and faster, and the earl was compelled to quit the contemplation of two names, the characters of which seemed to sear his eyeballs. To separate the beings to whom they belonged, he had sacrificed all that could render life desirable, health and peace; and here they were, newly cut, on that particular tree, to torture his eyes and

heart, just as if it had been known he would that morning pass the spot, where all the guilt and all the misery of his life had commenced.

Spurring his horse, he lost sight, in a few moments, of the evergreen oak ; but the remembrance of the names cut in its bark accompanied him to the broom-covered dingle, where stood the hut of Maggie Greame—where, rapping against the door, a girl appeared on the threshold, who mistook him for one Jamie Ross, a person of some consideration in the neighbourhood, whom the old woman had sent for the day before.

Addressing lord Deveron in the broad Scottish accent, the girl said—“ Gude troth, sir, auld Maggie will be unca glad to find you are come at last—Poor soul! she is sair bad, sure enough, and says she canna think to die till she has told you a’ her sins.”

The earl found he had arrived at a critical moment, and congratulated himself that he had preceded the expected person ;

he threw himself from the back of the horse, and hurried toward the miserable bed, on which lay, gasping and panting for breath, the still more miserable old woman; a filthy, squalid, and disgusting spectacle of extreme poverty.

The earl surveyed her with sensations of horror: when he had last seen her, she was in the enjoyment of robust health, and her appearance was strong, ruddy, and cleanly; she was now a disgusting living skeleton, and as he observed the extreme difficulty of her respiration, he said mentally—“Poor wretch! her life is near the close—in another hour I had been too late.”

As he bent over her, she fixed her filmy eyes on his face, and though his person had undergone a fearful change, she recognized him at once, and giving a faint shriek, she buried her head beneath the tattered rug, that was spread over her shivering limbs.

“What is it so terrifies you, Maggie?” said lord Deveron; “look up, and behold in me a friend—look up without dread; I come to assist and comfort you.”

"Na, na!" replied the old woman, "I dare nae look up, for I wist you are the de'il; but though I am a great sinner, I ha'e hope to escape frae your clutches, for I ha'e lang sine done wi' a' the works of darkness; I will labour nae mair for sic' an evil master."

"Why, Maggie," said the girl, uncovering her face, "are you gane crazy? Your head is nae right, or you would ken that this man is Jamie Ross: did nae you say you wanted to speak wi' him?"

"Your are mistaken, girl," replied the earl, "I am not Jamie Ross."

"Na!" said the girl, staring, and looking as if she was afraid that he really was the devil, "na, are you nae Jamie Ross?"

"No," resumed he, "I am the lord of Deveron Castle."

The lord of Deveron Castle, the ignorant girl had been taught to believe was an awful personage, not to be approached by poor people; she dropped three or four awkward curtsies, and drew up close in a corner of the smoky hearth.

The old woman, groaning heavily, said

—“ If you are indeed Archibald Bruce, and nae the de’il, I wist full weel you can do nought for the comfort of my afflicted soul, for you are as wicked as mysel’—Na, there is nae comfort for me in this life. Dinna you ken that my body has been sae sair pinched wi’ want, that a’ my auld banes are staring through my skin? Nae gude has betided me sine I first handled your siller; I ha’e had nae luck at a’—nae-thing has prospered, or gane right, that I offered to take in hand. Comfort and assistance come too late for Maggie Greame—I wist I am boun’ to die quickly; but, before I gang awa’ to that place where I mun gi’e an account of a’ my evil deeds, I mun speak wi’ Jamie Ross; he is a gude mon, and sall let the lady Roslyn know a’ the trouble that lies just like a huge lump of lead on my heart: I will tell him a’ my ain sins, and ane or twa of yours.”

This speech had not been uttered without many interruptions; and now, from mere faintness, she remained silent; and the earl remembered it was not necessary to have a witness to the questions he

wanted to ask Maggie Greame; he therefore commanded the girl to mount his horse, and proceed with all speed to Deveron Castle, and there obtain from Maud, the housekeeper, wine, and such other nourishments and necessities as the suffering Maggie Greame stood in need of.

Having seen the girl depart, he closed the door of the hut, and perceiving the old woman had again recovered breath, he put such questions to her as he conceived necessary to the immediate elucidation of the mysterious affair that had instigated and impelled his journey to Scotland—But Maggie Greame expressed the utmost horror and astonishment at his interrogations; and, to his indescribable disappointment and perplexity, declared herself absolutely ignorant of all he wished and hoped to learn.

Again and again he examined the wretched creature, till having wearied himself and her with reiterated questions, he found he was not a jot nearer the development of the strange affair, than when he listened to the surprising tale related by

Alexander Duncan, at Ellesmere Castle; but if Maggie Greame was sincere in her protestations, and was really ignorant in the business, which she denied her knowledge of in too solemn a manner to be doubted, her daughter was thoroughly acquainted with the subject of his inquiry, as she had been the chief agent in the affair, and he eagerly asked where Janet was?

The old woman seemed deeply affected at this inquiry, and said—"I was in hopes you could ha' told me some news of her; for though she has kept awa' frae my knowledge, I did suppose you was nae stranger to her place o' abode—Wae is me! I wist not if she be alive or dead! Archibald Bruce," continued she, raising her skinny wrinkled hand, and pointing to the door, "gang your gait—I canna look upon you but wi' dread and trouble; gang awa', and let me spend my last hour as I ought; gang awa' to your grand castle, where you ha'e nae mair right nor I ha'e, if ilka ane had his ain; gang your gait, Archibald Bruce, and be happy wi' your ill-gotten

siller, an' your heart will let you. I was as merry and as blithesome as a burnie bee, ance, in this poor hut, till you deluded Janet, and made her take to wicked courses, and persuaded me to make nae stir, but to keep a' frae the sight of the auld earl and the baroness. Janet was an honest canty lassie, and minded to spin and card, and to labour for a living, till you drew her aside wi' fine laces and ribbands, and siclike gauds, and promised me you would be the making of us baith; the de'il lent you tongue, and me lugs. Weel, weel," continued she, groaning, "you will ha'e it a' to answer for, ane of these days, though you are now ca'd the lord of Deveron Castle."

Unheeding the prediction of the suffering wretch, who had spoken with extreme pain, the earl inquired—"Whither did Janet go, and wherefore did she quit Scotland?"

"Why, a' our neighbours about the Wangle suspected she had gotten a bairn," replied the old woman, "and every body hereabout asked questions, and was busy

to hear what she had done wi' it; some jeered at and flouted her, and some folks believed it was likely she had murdered the bairn; and at last they spake wi' the elders about it, and she was threatened to sit on the stool, in the kirk, in a white sheet. So, to get rid of a' this trouble, she ga'ed awa' wi' the lad that used to woo her, wi' Davy Saunderson, till England, where she hoped her shame had nae gane afore her."

"To England!" repeated the earl, in evident trepidation; "how long is it since Janet left Scotland?"

"It is many a long wearisome year," said Maggie Greame, "since Janet left these parts, and stripped the hut, and took wi' her a' she could carry awa'."

"But answer me, I beseech you," resumed the earl, "to what part of England did Janet go?"

"I wist nought of the matter," replied the old woman; "I wist nought of ony place but the forest of Mar, in the Wangle; a' I can tell you is, that Janet left me here, to bear poverty and shame, and

she has been to me as ane dead and buried e'er sine."

"Unnatural wretch!" exclaimed the earl; "I thought I had sufficiently provided against either of you ever experiencing the horrors of poverty—But can it be possible that she could have the heart to leave you without giving you a share of the money she received from me the night before I left the castle?"

"She carried awa' the siller, e'en to the last baubee," replied Maggie Greame; "but you wist it was yoursel' that taught her to be wicked, and you ought not to find fau't wi' the work of your ain hands. I waited, day after day, and year after year, wi' the hope that you would come back to Scotland, though I was mindful that you was nae like to find mickle peace at the castle, considering a' the deeds you ha'e done, till make yoursel' master."

"Woman, woman!" exclaimed the earl, "forbear—you harrow up my soul!"

"Na', I will speak my mind," resumed she, "for my time is a'maist at an end in this troublesome world, and I ha'e

nae mair to hope or to fear what mortal man can do till me; and I will tell you, Archibald Bruce, you kept nane of the oaths that you sware sa oft—Na, Archibald Bruce, nae Janet came nigh, to help me in my auld age, when poverty laid a chill hand upon me.”

“ You should have let me know your distress,” said lord Deveron.

“ The steward and dame Maud ca’d me auld witch, and drave me frae the castle-gate,” resumed she; “ and then my legs grew feeble, and failed to carry me about; and my eye-sight went sa dim, that I could nae mair see to spin for a bit of bread—nae mair gang till the forest to pick up a rotten stick, or a bundle of dry leaves, to kindle up a blaze on the hearth, to warm my auld shivering limbs, when the sna’ was falling, and the cauld winds were piping round my hut.”

“ These miseries are past,” said lord Deveron; “ look forward, Maggie, to better times—you shall suffer the evils of poverty no more; I will have you removed to the

castle, where, with proper care, your health may again be restored."

"Na," replied Maggie Greame, "na, I will die here—I will nae gang till the castle; I should ha'e far less rest there than here, for the ghaists of them wha are dead lang sine would rise up frae their graves, to mind me of a' the wicked deeds that I ha'e lent a helping hand till. You are nae friend of mine, Archibald Bruce; you are sent here by the de'il himsel', to tempt me to commit mair sin in my last hour. Gang your gait, and let me alane, that I may die in quiet, for my auld heart is broken in twain, and nought can e'er bring me health in this world! Oh, if I could only see Janet, and tell her to have pity on her own soul, and repent her sins! If I could only speak a word or twa wi' lady Roslyn, I should ha'e nothing mair to wish! Oh, if I had been stout on my legs, if my eyesight had been gude, I would ha'e gane awa' till England mysel', and set my sair conscience at rest, which has troubled me night and day, sine I took the siller to keep your counsel."

Gasping for breath, the wretched old woman sunk back on her bed, and her eyes presently closing, the earl supposed she was in the agonies of death; the appearance of her countenance was ghastly, sunken, and horrible; the earl gazed till the pulses of his own heart seemed to chill, while the idea of remaining alone in the hut with a corpse filled him with sensations of terror; he hastily threw open the door, and looked out, in the hope of seeing the girl he had dispatched to the castle on her return.

The tangled paths of the wide forest of Mar were before him, but no human being appeared in any direction, and the rain was still falling heavily from the dark clouds, thickly spread over a lowering sky.

At length, as he cast round his anxious eyes, he beheld a man emerge from the road that led to Aberdeen. Lord Deveron impatiently beckoned with his hand, to hasten him forward.

As he approached, the stranger said—
 “If this is the hut of Maggie Greame, I was sent for yesterday; the poor woman, I

find, is very ill, and wishes to inform me of some matters that trouble her conscience, and prevent her dying in peace."

"You have arrived too late, sir," replied the earl—"the miserable creature is no more; and whatever were the communications she intended to make, they will never now be known in this world."

The stranger entered the hut, and approached the bed, while the earl continued—"Having known this old woman some years ago, I was shocked, after a long absence from Scotland, to hear of her distress. I arrived at Deveron Castle only last night; and a motive of charity has brought me hither this morning, to inquire in person after her illness and necessities; but, unfortunately, I only arrived in time to witness her last moments."

The stranger having surveyed the earl, said—"Doubtless, then, she has confided to your lordship the secret she was so anxious to disclose to me?"

"No," replied lord Deveron, "the wretched creature has made no confession to me; nor can I suppose she could have

any matter of importance to impart. Possibly she might wish that some devout person would pray beside her ; but as to secret, what secret can it be supposed a woman in her lowly sphere of life could possibly have to communicate ?”

“ To that I cannot answer,” said the stranger ; “ but report, many years back, spoke of her and her daughter leading evil lives. I was from home when her messenger came to fetch me yesterday, but the girl told my wife that Maggie Greame raved continually about some wrong she had done to lady Roslyn, which she wanted to disclose and make atonement for.”

“ Her daughter once lived servant with the baroness Waldeck,” returned lord Deveron, “ and removed with her to the castle : perhaps she might have robbed the baroness, and her mother being privy to the act, may wish to make atonement. Lady Roslyn, during her daughter’s service with the baroness, became my wife, and as the old woman knew me, it is strange, if she had any circumstance she

wished conveyed to the countess, she did not inform me."

"Very true," replied the stranger, taking up the cold withered hand that lay upon the rug. "She is not dead!" continued he; "the vital spark is not quite extinct—her pulse yet faintly beats."

To lord Deveron this was far from welcome intelligence; he would have been much better pleased to hear she was really dead, for now a secret trembled on the verge of disclosure, that had been kept inviolate for near nineteen years. The person so intently counting the faint pulsations of Maggie Greame was Jamie Ross, the gude man she had sent for, and so anxiously wished to see: no doubt, if she again awoke, she would at once unburthen her oppressed conscience, and by revealing an unexpected, and utterly unsuspected transaction, blast his fame for ever.

While Jamie Ross patiently watched the deathlike slumber of Maggie Greame, lord Deveron paced the hut with a mind all perturbation and dismay—one moment resolving to bribe the stranger to silence

on the subject of what he might learn from the old woman, and the next meditating to hasten to the castle, and at once put an end to his torments and his life.

While enduring this dreadful agitation, Jamie Ross gave his thoughts a new turn, by asking if the poor old creature had seemed to possess her senses.

“ I think not, sir,” replied lord Deveron; “ her discourse appeared very wild—no, I am persuaded her senses wandered.”

“ It is very likely,” resumed Jamie Ross: “ she has, I understand, suffered very much from poverty ; and great necessity, combined with long sickness, may have injured her intellects ; her death will be a mercy.”

In this opinion the earl acquiesced with sincerity.

The return of the girl from Deveron Castle now called off the attention of Jamie Ross from the old woman ; but the earl still anxiously watched her countenance, which appeared slightly convulsed, and he regretted that her sleep was not

eternal, as, with a deep and piteous groan, she again opened her eyes.

Perceiving Jamie Ross, she made an effort to raise herself from the bed; but nature was too far exhausted, and she faintly murmured—"Too late, too late!"

The girl having poured out a little wine, by the direction of Jamie Ross, raised the old woman in her arms, while he, with looks of compassion, tried to pour a few drops in her mouth, and to moisten her parched lips.

With much difficulty she swallowed a small quantity of the wine; then feebly clasping the pitying hand that held the cup to her lips, she said—"Alack! I am sair sick, but I canna get leave to lay me down and die, till the heavy load is awa' frae my conscience."

Again she sunk back on the shoulder of the girl, breathless and unable to proceed, when, with a look of wildness and despair, the earl of Deveron placed himself at the foot of her bed, having wrought up his mind to the desperate resolve of hearing his own condemnation.

In a few moments Maggie Greame again recovered speech, and stretching out a long bony finger, she pointed to the earl. —“ ‘That is the de’il,” said she, “ in the shape of Archibald Bruce—he comes, e’en at my last hour, to tempt me to commit evil, and wrang the innocent, that he may carry awa’ my soul to the place of howling and gnashing of teeth ! But I sall tell a’ that troubles my mind, though he stands there, staring at me ; for it is a’ over wi’ me in this life, and his siller sall lead me into nae mair sin.”

From this speech, very wild in his idea, Jamie Ross was convinced the brain of the poor creature was not right, and he made a gentle effort to release himself from her hold ; but her cold hand still clasped his, and she continued to say—“ Archibald Bruce, as a’ our neighbours rightly suspected, brought Janet, my girl, to shame : she had a bairn by him—it was a lad, but it died before it saw the light.”

“ So best,” replied Jamie Ross, “ the poor babe escaped a world of sorrow.”

“ But its birth brought mickle sorrow

to me," resumed the old woman, "for the siller of Archibald Bruce made me——" Her lips moved, but no sound issued from them—the rigidity of death was seizing her vitals; but struggling with the pangs of dissolution, she indistinctly murmured—"Jamie Ross, if you wish me to bide quiet in my grave, gang awa' wi' a' speed to lady Roslyn, and tell her that the babe——"

Large drops of cold perspiration burst forth and hung on the forehead of the earl of Deveron, his knees smote against each other, his hands were clenched in agonizing expectation of a disclosure that would render him an object of detestation in the eyes of all mankind—But the last words had breathed from the lips of Maggie Greame, and her eyes had closed in the everlasting sleep of death.

"Poor unhappy wretch!" said Jamie Ross, "her worldly troubles are at an end—her secret has died with her; but I trust her penitence was sincere, let her crime be of what magnitude it might, that she may meet mercy and pardon from her heavenly Judge."

The earl, with a wild look and in a hurried tone, asked—"Is she dead? are you sure she is really dead?"

"Yes, auld Maggie is gane dead at last, sure enough," replied the girl, smoothing the tattered rug that covered her stiffening limbs; "but wha is to stay by her, and put her banes ready for the grave? I sall gang and tell mither to come."

The girl did not wait for a reply, but flew with the speed of a lapwing from the hut, happy to escape the vicinity of a dead body, of which, being addicted to the popular superstitions of the country, she was terribly afraid, and went away with no intention to return.

Jamie Ross had before observed the pallid countenance of lord Deveron, the indication of ill health; he now perceived him strongly affected, and having drawn from the hearth a wooden stool, he persuaded him to sit, and recommended that he should take a cup of the wine he had sent for from the castle for the use of the deceased.

The earl, almost unconscious of what he

did, drank the wine presented by Jamie Ross, and being a little restored to recollection, said—"The charge preferred by Maggie Greame against me is, I confess, partly true. In the thoughtless ungoverned days of youth, I had an intimacy with her daughter Janet, but I was not her seducer—no, I thank Heaven I have not that crime to answer for; the consequence of our frailty was a child, which, they informed me, was born dead. The notice I had taken of Janet, and the presents she obtained from me, made her pert, bold, and assuming; and in order to get rid of her entirely, when I married the widow of lord Roslyn, I gave her a sum of money, amply sufficient, as I believed, to maintain herself and her mother comfortably, in their own sphere, during both their lives; and, after an absence of many years from Scotland, I was surprised to find Maggie Greame in such extreme indigence. What has become of Janet I know not; but it appears evident she left her mother to wretchedness and poverty, having robbed her of all that should have provided for the

infirmities of advanced age—the miserable end of the old woman we have seen.”

“ I am sorry,” said Jamie Ross, “ I did not arrive sooner. The poor wretch had something lying heavy on her mind, which she was anxious to make known to lady Roslyn—something she muttered about the babe—Can your lordship form no idea respecting the secret she wished to communicate?”

“ No, really, my good sir,” returned lord Deveron, “ I have not the remotest guess.”

“ She certainly said something about lady Roslyn’s babe,” resumed Jamie Ross, in a thoughtful tone; “ her child, too, was born dead, I think—an odd coincidence. I wish I had been here an hour or two sooner.”

“ It is extremely difficult, I may say impossible,” returned the earl, “ to guess what wild and improbable imaginations might possess a fevered and bewildered brain; and yourself must be convinced her intellects were not sound, and that her speech demonstrated mental derangement.”

In this opinion Jamie Ross acquiesced,

but he pertinaciously adhered to the wish of having arrived an hour or two sooner, a wish in which lord Deveron was very far from joining, though he thought proper to say—"For your own satisfaction, sir, I wish you had, though it strikes me the old woman's wandering fancy would have commissioned you to tell lady Roslyn, as she persisted in calling the countess of Deveron, that Janet had been the mother of a child by me; she might also wish you to recommend Janet to her charity, she having formerly been her servant."

The girl not returning, nor any person appearing to stay with the corpse, or prepare it for the grave, the earl expressed to Jamie Ross his intention of being at the charge of the funeral, and requested that he would take upon himself the trouble of seeing the remains of Maggie Greame laid decently in the earth; which being faithfully promised, lord Deveron left the hut in the dingle, to which, many years before, he had made frequent licentious visits.

He had now, most unexpectedly indeed,

attended the deathbed of Maggie Greame, who, at the period of his criminal intimacy with her daughter, had no compunctious scruples, but was actually proud that her girl had attracted his notice; and, won by his money, she would have performed his will, without hesitation, to any extent; but sickness and want, those tamers of the passions, those great reformers of the vicious heart, had placed her crimes before her in all their glaring and frightful enormity; she yet believed it to be in her power, and she anxiously and fervently wished, to make atonement to the person she had most injured; and though this act of justice was not permitted her, the last days of Maggie Greame were by far the best of her life, for she saw her offences in a proper point of view, and died truly penitent.

The earl of Deveron, when he set out for the dingle, was not aware of the trial he had to sustain: he, rich and powerful, the lord of the domain, had, in a mean hut, at the bedside of a miserable old woman, trembled and felt confounded; for well he

knew that a secret dwelt in the bosom of that wretched creature, which, if divulged, would debase him to the level of the vilest, and, what to him appeared most terrible, would assuredly render him abhorred by Constance, to obtain whom he had waded deep in guilt, for whom his heart still felt an unabated passion, though convinced that her affection had never been enjoyed by him.

Maggie Greame was dead—the “*damning tale*” remained untold; and though he came to Scotland for the express purpose, as he himself thought, of unravelling a perplexed mystery—to make atonement, such is the weakness and wickedness of the human heart, he now shrunk from disclosure, and exulted in the certainty that none but Janet had the power to betray him; and she had been so many years absent from Scotland, that it was more than probable she no longer existed.

These reflections had so entirely occupied the attention of lord Deveron, that he mistook the path conducting from the dingle to the road on the verge of the forest;

and when recovered from the reverie into which he had fallen, he found himself in the depth of the forest, in a part where he never remembered to have been but once before, and that on an occasion he would gladly have forgotten. The trees were here of enormous size, and their wide-spreading branches cast a dark shadow over the path, gloomy even at the noon-day of summer; and the state of his mind did not contribute to brighten a scene rendered still more dreary by the dark and heavy clouds and thick falling rains of winter. The earl had a faint recollection of a path that led to the road cut on the edge of the forest, and he attempted to turn his horse's head toward an opening made on the left hand, but the animal, naturally gentle and obedient to command, resisted the rein, and, snorting and rearing, opposed the effort that would have impelled him forward. Lord Deveron knew, that at a short distance in that direction stood a cluster of huts, inhabited by woodmen and other peasants; to these huts it was his wish to go, and from thence dispatch a

messenger to the castle for his carriage; again he attempted to turn his horse to the left, when his own appalled eyes fell on the object that had terrified the generous animal: with one arm resting in a melancholy posture on the withered branch of a fir, he beheld, or fancied he beheld, him whom the grave had received full nineteen years, Leolin lord Roslyn. The reins fell from his nerveless hands, and the horse, as if hurried on by supernatural influence, dashed onward at full speed, threatening destruction to his powerless and nearly insensible rider; but fortunately for the preservation of the earl's life, the flying speed of the affrighted horse was stopped by two woodmen, who, unable to stand the drenching rain, were hastily retreating homeward with the implements of their labour. The voices of these honest men congratulating him on his safety, and expressing wonder how he had kept his seat, recalled the fleeting senses of lord Deveron, who having dismounted from the back of the panting reeking animal, desired to be conducted to the nearest dwelling, which, at a few paces

distant, appeared peeping from between a thicket of young oaks. Assisted by the kind-hearted peasants, the earl entered a neat cottage, where he was instantly offered the best fare the place afforded—milk newly drawn from the bleating ewes, and oaten cake; but his heart was too sick, and his thoughts too painfully occupied and disturbed by his recent adventure, to accept the hospitality of his host, offered with honest courtesy and hearty good will.

Having dispatched a messenger to Deveron Castle to command the attendance of Conrad with the carriage, he sunk back in the wooden chair, the only one the cottage afforded, which was placed for him out of the wind of the door, close by the blazing hearth; and here he beheld a spectacle of domestic felicity that filled his bosom with unutterable pangs: a young woman of healthy and smiling countenance having welcomed the return of her husband, hastened away to provide him dry garments, while two sturdy young urchins, a girl and boy, contended with each other

for the first kiss from their apparently delighted father.

“Happy peasants!” said the earl, sighing heavily, “your wealth is innocence, content, and love. Alas! what enjoyments have I obtained, that will bear the least comparison with your heartfelt happiness—pure, unalloyed with dread or remorse? For empty splendour, for the tinsel of grandeur, I have banished peace from my heart—I have driven sleep from my eyes—I have plunged my soul in guilt—Oh, how deep!” His shuddering thoughts then reverted to the pale shadowy figure he had seen in the forest, and as his memory recalled the melancholy reproachful countenance, his veins chilled, and his limbs shook with the tremor of fear.—“Everywhere this phantom haunts me,” murmured the earl; “in that fatal part of the forest, beneath that very tree—Oh, would that memory were lost! would that my too retentive senses were steeped in oblivion! Yes, on the very spot where the guilty act was committed, the unquiet spirit of Leo-lin appeared to upbraid me with violated

friendship—with base and cruel treachery—
 —with usurpation. Yet, are these things
 possible? Did I really behold a disembodied spirit? was it really so? or did fancy, full of horrible recollections of the past, conjure up this appalling vision?—
 Yes, yes, it must be so—it could only be the wild creation of my feverish brain; the well-remembered spot recalled to my imagination the guilty scene that once was acted there. Oh, conscience, conscience! thou terrible avenger of our crimes! nor wealth nor power can still thy upbraidings! perpetually dost thou inflict torture—incessantly dost thou repeat the baseness of ingratitude, the heinous sin of broken faith—thine are the horrors that succeed the dreams of ambition! Yet, in vain do I endeavour to satisfy my mind on this fearful point—in vain do I try to believe that my terrors were the offspring of a fevered imagination: my horse was terrified; the poor animal fled in horror from the spectral form my eyes beheld leaning against the tree, blighted even as his youth was blighted. Were it not better I at once made

confession of my crimes, and suffered the vengeance of the laws I have outraged and offended, than drag about this load of agony—than endure continual terror?”

While lord Deveron thus communed with his own mind, and suffered the stings of a reproving conscience, his faithful Swiss arrived at the cottage. From the wildness of the earl's looks, and the more than usual pallidness of his features, Conrad perceived that something even more alarming than his horse running away with him had happened, which circumstance had been related at the castle.

Lord Deveron having liberally rewarded the woodman, attempted to ascend his carriage, but the weakness and tremor of his frame took from him all power of action, and he was again obliged to the strong athletic arms of the woodman, who lifted him in. Before he reached the gates of the castle he fainted, and on his arrival he was borne immediately to his bed, where he lay many days in deplorable weakness of body and distraction of mind. The care

and discretion of Conrad, who had too often seen his lord in the same wretched and pitiable situation, kept all the domestics of the castle from entering his chamber, except the old housekeeper, Maud, who having been all her life in the service of the Deverons, he thought might assuredly be relied upon to conceal the strange distraction and ravings of the earl; gratitude and respect for the family, he supposed, would place a seal on her lips, and keep her from repeating his extravagant fancies; for he had again sunk into the same miserable hypochondriac state, out of which he had been so recently reasoned and happily relieved by the cheerful sensible conversation of Mr. Duncan, at Ellesmere Castle.

But though Maud's fidelity to the Deveron family would have sustained the severest trial, the lady Marian had always been considered the black sheep of the flock, and her son Archibald having, even in early childhood, discovered a proud and artful disposition, had never been a favourite with Maud; and when, grown to man-

hood, he presumed to think lightly of and assail her virtue, he completed her dislike, which had rather increased than diminished, since by the death of lord Roslyn the title and possessions had devolved to him. Maud could never bring herself to consider Archibald Bruce, as she continued to call him, the lawful heir, but always looked upon him in the hateful view of an usurper. Thus feeling towards the lord of Deveron Castle, she by no means considered it necessary to keep silence, either respecting his ravings, which were strange and horrible, or her own suspicions; and every day, after visiting his apartments, she constantly replied to the inquiries of the domestics—"The mind of Archibald Bruce is much more distempered than his body, or I am much out in my judgment; his conscience is sorely troubled—Heaven be merciful to his sins!"

"Gude troth, thy prayer bespeaks thy charity, Maud," said the butler; "and if I interpret thy meaning properly, thy mind thinks he has many to be forgiven."

"As I am a Christian woman," return-

ed Maud, "I would not have his conscience for twenty times the possessions he has made himself heir to."

"Made himself heir to!" repeated the steward, in a tone of surprise.

"Ay, man—made himself heir to," repeated Maud; "these are my very words, and I will not eat them, though they should put my neck in danger. Mark my words, honest friend; Archibald Bruce I never did like; he was a bad disposed child—he grew up a wicked, cunning, wild young man, though he had art enough to impose upon the old earl and his cousin, lord Roslyn, making every body but himself appear in the wrong; but as I said before, mark my words, it will appear that the child of lady Roslyn did not come by its death fairly."

"Hush, Maud! hush! take care of saying what you are not able to prove!" said the butler; "such unguarded expressions may bring you into trouble."

"I am already in trouble," replied Maud; "the ravings of Archibald Bruce have, I verily believe, a dreadful meaning. Well may his Swiss, who, I verily believe,

is in all his wicked secrets, keep such strict watch over him, and allow no one to see him. Why, bless your souls, I am not permitted to go into his bedchamber; and it was only by accident, when the door was open, that I overheard what made me tremble in every joint; but as I said before, mark my words, Archibald Bruce has lived an evil life, and he will certainly die an ill death."

While the earl of Deveron, victim of a tormented conscience, was confined to his bed, a heavy snow fell, and a severe frost succeeding it, lay upon the ground for several days. At this period, the steward paying an accidental visit to the Wangle Villa, discovered the print of feet in the snow, from the iron gates of the flower-garden to the glass door that opened on the conservatory, where a small collection of the beautiful plants and exotics yet survived, that were formerly cultivated by the lady Constance with admiring attention.

The steward on his return to the castle related this circumstance to Maud, who then called to remembrance the light seen

by lord Deveron in the middle window of the villa, on the night of his arrival at the castle.—“The holy saints defend us,” said she, “from the marauders that infest the Highlands! Perhaps the villa has been robbed, for there were articles of sufficient value to tempt plunderers. You know,” continued she, with a sagacious nod of her head, “I have often advised that the furniture should be removed, and now no doubt the richest part of it is removed far enough.”

“You are mistaken there, Maud,” returned the steward; “I have carefully examined every room in the house, and there is not a single article missing.”

“Surprising!” exclaimed Maud.

“Yes,” replied the steward, “but I have not told you all, and the rest is more surprising than what you have heard; for though I found all the doors locked, yet I am certain that some person has been there; for I found a picture of the baroness, that used to hang in the breakfast-parlour, removed from thence, and lying on a table in the chamber where she used to sleep.”

Maud gave a loud shriek, and clasping her hands, said—"Be merciful to us, and pardon us all our sins, miserable sinners that we are! Sandy, Sandy! as sure as we live, man, the Wangle Villa is haunted."

The steward, though a Highlander, was not much given to the superstitions of his country; he smiled, and repeated—"Haunted!"

"Ay, man," resumed Maud; "as sure as we are now speaking, the ghost of the baroness walks—poor soul! poor soul! And no wonder she is disturbed, Sandy; she can have no rest in her grave, because she persuaded the sweet lady Constance, the widow of lord Roslyn, to marry Archibald Bruce; and for my part, I should not wonder if all the Deverons were to walk out of the marble monument in the chapel to haunt him every night. Oh dear! dear! what a dismal place the castle is become! I protest, as I am a Christian woman, I am grown so fearful that I start at my own shadow."

The steward never remembered Maud other than afraid of her own shadow, but

laughing at her terrors, he replied—"I never heard of a ghost that painted pictures, and see here—I found these pencils and this piece of ivory with part of a face sketched upon it, beside the portrait of the baroness. As for ghosts, Maud, that is all nonsense; it would be a sad thing indeed, if after people were laid in their graves, they were to start up again upon every occasion to plague and frighten the living; for my part, I believe some person wishes for a likeness of the baroness, who was truly a very handsome woman, and not choosing to ask a favour of the earl, has contrived by some means to gain admittance to the villa. That it is no robber is evident; but who the person is who contrives to employ himself thus clandestinely is a matter of surprise. I shall make it my business to inquire about the forest if any strangers have been seen, and I will also keep a good watch upon the villa."

While lord Deveron was confined to his chamber, Jamie Ross called twice at the castle, and expressed a very particular and earnest desire to see him; but as the

visits of all persons had been peremptorily forbidden, he was compelled to return, leaving a message with Conrad, that he had a paper he wished to shew the earl. Some weeks had worn away before the earl was at all able to leave his bed for more than an hour at a time, and many days afterwards elapsed before he could summon courage to venture into the adjoining apartment, or at all endure to converse on any subject, though during all this distressing period he refused to call in medical advice, and employed Conrad to write such accounts to England as satisfied the countess and his son lord Ellesmere with respect to his health, which was represented as not worse than when he left Northumberland.

One day Conrad took occasion to mention the calls made by Jamie Ross, and repeated what he had said about a paper he wished to shew the earl.

“ I understand the motive of his anxiety to see me,” replied lord Deveron; “ fearful that my illness should terminate in death, he wished to remind me of the pro-

mise I made to defray the expence of Maggie Greame's funeral, which, in case of my demise, would fall on him. The paper he speaks of is a bill to be delivered; good Conrad, commission the steward to call and discharge it, which being done, the mind of Jamie Ross will be at rest."

On the same night, being in the act of receiving a posset from the hand of Maud, the earl again observed the mysterious light in the middle window of the Wangle Villa—"There is the light again," said lord Deveron, pointing to the window; "and there being now no moon, my eyes cannot be deceived."

The old housekeeper saw the light herself, and retaining all her suspicion of the villa being haunted, she turned pale with fear, and thrown off her guard, exclaimed—"The mercy of Heaven be upon us! it is the ghost of the baroness; and no wonder the poor soul can have no rest in her grave."

This unwary speech was not likely to pass unnoticed by the earl, and he sternly demanded why she should not rest in her grave?

Maud saw her imprudence, but not having an excuse at hand, she replied—
“Nay, how should I know? I am sure I never did any thing to her or hers, that should prevent her soul from being at rest.”

“Know you of any person that has done her wrong?” asked the earl, assuming a composure he did not feel.

“I know nothing of the matter,” replied Maud; “but I have heard——”

Policy suggested to her at that instant the wisdom of stopping short in her incautious speech.

The brow of lord Deveron contracted into a dark frown, as he impatiently demanded—“What is it you have heard?”

“It is only fools who tell all they hear,” returned Maud; “and I have many times been reminded by the late countess, that ‘A still tongue makes a wise head.’”

“I marvel much,” replied the earl, “that with the rest of her documents, the countess failed to instruct you in the respect due to your superiors. Go, woman,” continued he, haughtily, “quit my presence, and in future hold it in your remembrance,

that age is no excuse for impertinent and malicious loquacity."

Maud, unused to be reprimanded, did not stay a second dismissal; she hastened with all the speed she could command along the dark oak gallery; for though she was much displeased, and felt her consequence highly offended at the lesson the earl had given her, yet her superstitious fears being excited by the mysterious light she had seen stream from the windows of the villa, she was not a little apprehensive of meeting the ghost of the baroness, who might, for ought she knew, be induced to pay a nocturnal visit to Deveron Castle, if it was only to remind Archibald Bruce of his sins, and point out to him the necessity of repentance.

The next morning, yielding to the earnest persuasions of Conrad, lord Deveron descended to the little saloon, from whence, at his express command, Maud had most unwillingly removed all the family portraits. Having required the attendance of the steward, lord Deveron mentioned to him the extraordinary ap-

pearance of light he had witnessed in the Wangle Villa. He was then informed of the circumstances that had fallen under the steward's observation, respecting the footsteps marked in the snow on the garden path, and the removal of the portrait from the breakfast-parlour to the bedchamber of the baroness.

To the various interrogations of the earl, the steward protested not only utter ignorance in the affair, but declared he had not the remotest suspicion of the intruder, as he had made every possible inquiry, and could not learn that any stranger had been seen on the domain, or in the vicinity of the Wangle Villa. The circumstance was passing strange; but the earl had of late been exercised in wonderful occurrences, and he connected in his own mind the lights in the villa with the appearance he had witnessed in the forest, and fearing to betray his own horrible suggestions, he ceased to inquire further.

The steward now informed lord Deveron, that in obedience to his commands he had called on Jamie Ross, to pay the fune-

ral charges of Maggie Greame—"whose receipt," said he, "I have brought in my hand, together with the bill for your lordship's inspection."

The earl, glancing his eyes over the papers, replied, "Now then, this money being paid, Jamie Ross is, I suppose, satisfied, and has no farther demand on or business with me."

"Jamie Ross told me," returned the steward, "that the paper he wished to shew your lordship had nothing to do with the funeral charges of Maggie Greame; but that he would wait upon you some time to-day."

"At his own leisure," answered the earl, negligently; for he paid little attention to the account given by the steward, supposing that Jamie Ross wanted to solicit the honour of his name to head some subscription, or that the paper was the petition of some unfortunate person in pecuniary distress.

Having dismissed this subject from his thoughts, he began to turn over in his mind what had been hinted respecting the

probability of some person entering the Wangle Villa, for the purpose of copying the best of the pictures—a notion that seemed confirmed, when he recollected the pencils and ivory found by the steward. But the idea of any person clandestinely entering the villa for the purpose of copying the paintings, some of them by the most eminent masters, was offensive and mortifying to his pride, as it seemed to imply a strong dislike and repugnance to solicit a favour from him. Satisfied that pencils and ivory could belong to no supernatural visitant, his haughty spirit was offended, and he resolved to watch for the next appearance of the light, and to go in person and seize the insolent intruder, whom he determined to expose and punish for his audacity.

While forming this plan, Jamie Ross was announced, who, being introduced to the presence of lord Deveron, with more truth than politeness told him he was very sorry for his ill looks.

The earl smiled, though he could have spared the observation, and replied, that

a continued series of ill-health did not contribute much to good looks.

"I remember," said Jamie Ross, "about twenty years ago, I think, your eyes were bright and your cheeks ruddy; but now," added he, looking at him piteously, "your eyes are as dim as the lead that composes the coffin of your cousin lord Roslyn, and your cheeks are as sunk and ghastly as the corpse that lies within it."

Lord Deveron shuddered, and requested to know his business.

"Perhaps," said Jamie Ross, "your lordship will think I have no business to meddle with the affair I come to speak about, but I could not rest till I waited upon you."

"Well, sir, to the affair," said the earl, expecting nothing more than a demand on his purse.

"In a box, under the bed of Maggie Greame," resumed Jamie Ross, "I found this paper."

The blood with velocity rushed to the face of the earl, and dyed it of the deepest crimson, as his unwelcome visitor presented to his trembling hand a soiled and

crease-worn letter, the writing of which was partly effaced by damp and age; again the blood retreated back to his heart, and left his features even paler than before, as his horror-struck eyes read—

“ Let your heart rejoice in security—your triumph is complete—the deed is accomplished, and without much expence of words; for the haughty vindictive baron no sooner perused your letter, than with malignant joy he entered at once into your views, and laid down a plan that has succeeded to your utmost wish—a dose of opium was skilfully prepared, and unsuspectedly administered. Again I say, rejoice; for at the still hour of midnight, in a state of insensibility, the bar to your greatness was conveyed from his bed to the depth of a dungeon, sunk in the bowels of the earth. Congratulate yourself on the completion of your desires; every impediment is now removed from your path, and you will attain the height after which your ambition has so anxiously panted.

But hold in your remembrance the stipulated price—fail not in any particular; for if you break through a single iota of our agreement, I shall consider myself absolved from my oath, and the whole transaction shall be disclosed, though I am certain to become the second victim; but if you act, as you are solemnly sworn to do, with liberality and generosity, recollecting all the saintly duplicity I have so successfully practised to serve you, what hazards I have run to promote your cause, what perils encountered, what fatigues endured on your account, what services I have already performed, and what I must still effect to secure your succession, then you shall ever find me a true friend, firm and staunch to your interest, secret and silent as the grave. To-morrow, with the dawn, I set off, as we planned, and when arrived at my next resting-place, the old dupe and the fair prize may expect a long and satisfactory account of our health and travels, of our dutiful respect and unabated tender affection. You will laugh at their credulity, and enjoy the successful imposition,

while my letter to you will fully explain my future operations. Our friend the baron bids me say, he will write to you immediately respecting the intended disposal of his prisoner: I am persuaded, for his own security, he will not let him linger long in confinement. So much the better for us all—dead men tell no tales. Adieu !”

The worthy Jamie Ross, while lord Deveron perused the letter, had not failed to remark the various changes of his countenance, though he had seemingly been employed in warming his half-frozen fingers over the blazing fire, and surveying with admiration the rich and tasteful adornments of the chimneypiece, on which, with exquisite skill, the sculptor had delineated the hunting of the Caledonian boar; but seeing him turn the paper, he shook his head with the action of disappointment, and said—“ It is very unlucky for the finding out of this horrible business, that the superscription is entirely effaced—I could not make out a single letter.”

“Nor is it of any consequence, I should suppose,” replied the earl, “for the whole of it is to me utterly unintelligible, unless considered, which to me appears most probable, as an extract from some old romance, which it appears more like than a real correspondence.”

“Very possibly it may be so,” replied Jamie Ross; “but old Maggie Greame, as your lordship may well remember, spoke of a heavy load upon her mind, a secret she anxiously desired to reveal; and I was doubtful in my own judgment, whether this same letter might not in some strange way relate to the secret that so greatly disturbed the poor creature’s last moments, and I thought——”

He stopped suddenly, for the earl was tearing the paper to pieces, and crumpling it between his fingers.

“Pray, sir, proceed,” said the earl; “what did you think?”

“Why, I thought,” replied Jamie Ross, “as there seemed to have been a thorough understanding between your lordship and the old woman, that you perhaps might

be able to furnish a key to that mysterious paper."

The blood of lord Deveron again mounted to his face—he looked and felt disconcerted, but struggling for composure, he said—"You give me credit, sir, for a far greater intimacy than ever existed between us. I have candidly confessed to you my youthful error with the daughter of Maggie Greame, in which my nature, naturally liberal and ingenuous, was made the dupe of venality and cunning; but if you suppose me at all acquainted with, or implicated in the secrets of the wretched old woman, your suspicion is an injury and insult to my rank and character. As to this ridiculous paper," continued he, tossing the pieces he had torn deliberately, one by one, into the fire, "I consider it, as I said before, a part of some wild, romantic, and most improbable legend, which some person, enamoured of the marvellous, and having no other more profitable employment, has taken the pains to write out." Perceiving, by the incredulous air of Jamie Ross, that he was not exactly satisfied with this explanation, he added—"for

who would have written thus to Maggie Greame?"

"To Maggie Greame!" repeated Jamie Ross; "no, certainly, no person could peruse the letter, and suppose it was addressed to her, poor old sinner. No, truly, my lord, I never once suspected her of being the principal, though she might have been an agent in the employ of the person to whom it was addressed."

"Your reasoning is certainly very profound," said lord Deveron, haughtily; "but I humbly beg leave to differ from your opinion, mister Ross; for if the paper, which I can only consider as mere romance, was the intelligencer of a real transaction, it is not very probable that either principal or agent would have entrusted to her a secret of such apparent magnitude, or have placed in the keeping of an ignorant old woman a paper of such high consequence."

"Her daughter Janet," said Jamie Ross, pertinaciously insisting in his belief of the paper being an actual correspondence, "her daughter Janet might know something of——"

“ Her daughter Janet,” replied the earl, impatiently interrupting him, “ was equally ignorant as herself, and I am certain had no knowledge of the affair.”

“ Oh, if your lordship is certain,” said Jamie Ross, “ I can have no more to offer on the subject—it is a very strange business though, I must say, and I think it was a great pity you burnt the paper so hastily; for if it was again in my possession, I would be at some pains to learn whether it was reality or fiction.”

“ It would be an idle curiosity,” returned lord Deveron, “ and time unwisely employed; and if you consider my favour of any consequence to you, mister Ross, you will cease to rake up the ashes of Maggie Greame—her name is hateful to me; and you will oblige me by letting all that relates to the wretched old woman be obliterated from your memory.”

“ Good troth, my lord,” replied Jamie Ross, proudly, “ I am above the meanness of telling falsehoods for the lucre of gain, or the hope of obtaining the countenance of great men; and if I were now to pro-

mise you that I would not speak of Maggie Greame, or remember the strange paper I found in her hut, I should engage my word for more than I could perform, and that would be bringing a scandal upon my character, which, make me thankful! I have hitherto escaped."

"As you please, sir," said the earl, stifling his vexation; "you will act according to your own discretion."

"The young girl whom your lordship saw at the hut," continued Jamie Ross, "relates strange things of the old woman, whom the poor ignorant people about the forest used to call a witch."

"And to this," said the earl, with a sneer, "I suppose, mister Ross, you also give credence."

"No, my lord," replied he, "I am not quite so weak or credulous; but though I do not believe that Maggie Greame was a witch, yet still I think that it was very possible——"

He paused; but on lord Deveron demanding what he thought possible? he said—"That in her last moments, my

lord, she might have had a gleaming of second sight." The curiosity of the earl was now excited, and he fixed his eyes anxiously on Jamie Ross, who continued—"The old woman, it seems, said she saw the coffins in Deveron chapel broken till pieces, and a green branch brought ahint the Tweed, and planted in the court-yard of the castle, which grew up till a stately tree."

The looks of the earl were disturbed, and he appeared much moved, while he inquired of Jamie Ross what he understood from this gleaming of second sight?

"I am no interpreter of dark sayings, my lord," replied Jamie Ross; "but this I do not hesitate to say, I shall, with many others, be much pleased to see the domain round Deveron Castle flourish again, which, to speak candidly, has been far from the case of late years; for while the family continue to reside in a distant country, the vassals and tenantry must endure poverty, and suffer various oppressions. The late earl of Deveron was warmly attached to his native mountains—he loved Scotland,

and passed the chief of his time at the castle; and the young and lamented lord Roslyn, I have been told, had laid down plans of improvement, that would have given bread to many families about the Wangle, who are now sinking under the heavy pressure of poverty."

This was speaking with much more freedom than lord Deveron approved, who finding Jamie Ross a man not likely either to be awed by a consideration of his rank, or bribed out of his integrity, he began to feel weary, and to wish his absence; but perceiving that he still kept his station by the fire, without evincing an intention to depart, he rose from his seat, and rung for refreshments; then coldly bidding him good-morning, he retired to indulge uninterrupted his own sombre thoughts, and muse over the contents of the paper he had consigned to the flames.

Jamie Ross, in the lifetime of the baroness Waldeck, had been frequently on business at the Wangle Villa, when Leolin lord Roslyn, and the honourable Mr. Bruce, were visitors there, and he had at

those times various opportunities of remarking the difference in manner and disposition of the two cousins. Twenty years ago, when he was young, gay, and spirited, Jamie Ross did not like Archibald Bruce—he liked him far less now he was earl of Deveron; and in addition to the recollection of many of his vices, he now strongly suspected that the letter found in the hut of Maggie Greame, which he had so very incautiously placed in his hands, was the real information of some most diabolical transaction in which he was deeply concerned. But the paper, with most consummate art, the earl had destroyed; and to assert, or even to speak of what he had no clue to unravel, nor possibility of proving, would, he was well aware, be in the eye of the law considered an aspersion of the character of the earl of Deveron.

“On his dark gloomy countenance,” said Jamie Ross, recapitulating his interview with the earl, “I could plainly read the workings of a mind not at peace with itself; then his throwing the paper into the fire, after tearing it to atoms—that was

bad, and convinces me he was better informed in the contents than he would acknowledge. But of his villany I can bring forward no proof, nor can I imagine who could be the victim so inhumanly buried in the depth of a dungeon. Had Maggie Greame lived, it is most likely she could have explained all this; but the grave covers her, and at present the secret is hid; but it may not always remain so—some unexpected chance may yet discover this mysterious business, for it rarely happens that guilt escapes unpunished, even in this life.”

Not at all satisfied with his visit to Deveron Castle, or the interview he had obtained with the earl, Jamie Ross refused to partake of the refreshments brought in on a massy gold salver, and hastily mounting his horse, he rode from the gates, saying to himself—“ My own salt herring and oat-cake has been honestly purchased, and will be sweeter to my palate than the luxuries of Archibald Bruce.”

The earl of Deveron, from the library windows, saw the departure of Jamie Ross, and it seemed a relief to him, for he was

glad to get rid of the presence of a man, who not only spoke his mind with what his pride construed into insolent freedom, but who also betrayed an inquisitive and officious disposition. But while pleased to lose sight of Jamie Ross, the dark saying of Maggie Greame dwelt on his mind with melancholy force; and during the whole day he could not forbear repeating—"I ken a' the coffins in Deveron chapel broken till pieces, and I ken a green branch brought ahint the Tweed, and planted in the court-yard of the castle, that grows up till a stately tree."—It is indeed more than probable," said lord Deveron, "that a green branch will be brought across the Tweed.—Yes," continued he, musing, "this part of the prediction will be literally fulfilled, for I shall most likely have no heirs to succeed me. But for the coffins in the chapel being broken up—alas! what will that avail, and who will feel an interest in displacing the dead? 'A green branch shall be brought ahint the Tweed.' Yes, the son of lady Ellen Adair shall be earl of Deveron: and to

give the succession to the son of a woman I despise, I have laboured in villany—I have devoted my own heart to unceasing misery—I have destroyed the peace of Constance. Could my own noble Algeron inherit, it would be some recompence for years of anguish: but no—he would disdain possessions so obtained—his virtuous spirit would spurn and reject a title bought by his father's treachery—by guilt and murder. Yet, who can speak to these deeds? Who will dare accuse me? Even if the coffins in the chapel were opened, who, after a lapse of nineteen years, could tell? Yet, though the oblivious darkness of the grave conceals my guilt, no son of mine shall succeed me—‘the green branch that grows to a stately tree’ shall not be my issue.”

The servant who carried in the refreshments to Jamie Ross returned them untouched to the housekeeper's room, and reported his refusal to partake of them to Maud.

“I am not surprised,” said she, “that the good man would not taste any thing,

now I understand he was so disrespectfully left alone by our haughty lord. Jannie Ross is well off in the world—he has no need to cringe and crouch, and lick the dust from any man's shoes. I very well remember, when I was a young girl——”

What Maud remembered, and was about to relate, met an interruption by the entrance of the butler, who just then returned from the forest, where he had been, as was his daily custom, to visit Ringwood, the old hound, and take him such dainty morsels as the hut of Davie Anderson did not afford; but when he that morning reached the woodman's hut, he found the object of his solicitude not only dead but buried.

“Poor old Ringwood is gone at last,” said the butler.

“Gone!” echoed Maud; “where could he go? He was too old and feeble to run away—somebody must have stolen him.”

“Yes,” replied the butler, mournfully shaking his head, “yes, Maud, death has stolen him.”

Maud shed tears when she found that the dog was really dead.—“Poor old fel-

low!" said she; "I loved him far better than I do many that pass for Christians. It was a very hard case indeed that he could not be permitted to end his days here at the castle, where he was born, and lived all the days of his life. There hangs his picture in the green chamber, with lord Roslyn riding on his back. Poor Ringwood! I loved the animal for the sake of his master, and it was my intention, when he died, to have him buried at lord Roslyn's feet. Davie Anderson, I know very well, is as honest and good-natured a soul as any about the Wangle," continued she, "and he promised me faithfully to be kind to, and take care of Ringwood, and no doubt he kept his word; and to be sure I know he could not save the dog's life when his time to die was come, even if he had nursed him in wool; but I wish he had died here at the castle for all that, because I think the poor fellow would have gone out of the world happier."

"Davie Anderson met with good luck through his death," said the butler.

"Ay! now you are at your jokes," re-

turned Maud; "the luck of getting rid of him you mean, I suppose? Poor Ringwood! Ay, good faith! age is always thought troublesome."

"You take my meaning wrong, I promise you," said the butler: "it is an odd story certainly, but very true nevertheless."

"Story!" repeated Maud, "what story about old Ringwood can there be to tell?"

"You shall hear," said the butler. "You remember, Maud, the poor old hound was very snappish to strangers."

"Yes, he was fretful and peevish, and did not like to be disturbed," replied Maud; "but what has that to do with your story?"

"You shall hear," said the butler, "all about it, if you will but have patience—you women are always in such a hurry: you must understand, two strangers—mark me, Maud—came to Davie Anderson's hut this morning, and asked for a draught of milk, when behold you, the hound no sooner heard them, than up he started from before the fire where he was lying, and crawling towards one of the strangers, began licking his hands; the stranger re-

turned his caresses, and called him by his name, when the poor old creature gave a cry of joy, and laying his head on the stranger's feet, died at once."

"Why, this is an odd story truly," returned Maud; "and does not Davie Anderson know who these strangers are?"

"No," said the butler, "he neither knows who they are, nor whence they came. But Davie told me, that one of them asked what brought Ringwood there, and shed tears over him, and stroked his head, and called him faithful creature."

"Take my word for it, they are friends of our dear departed lord," resumed Maud. "I wish I had seen them—I should perhaps have known them."

"Very likely," said the butler: "however, Davie Anderson, it seems, made no bones about the matter, but told all about the old beast being sent from the castle there to save his life; and then the stranger made Davie wrap him up in a piece of tartan, and carry him into the forest, and there they dug a hole, and buried him under a large fir-tree; and the stranger

spoke a great deal, and with much earnestness, to his friend, but Davie is not much of a scholar, and he could not understand a single word, because it was some outlandish talk, he said, that he had never heard before; but he gave Davie a guinea for his trouble, and sent him home quite satisfied with his morning's work. So there is the end of poor old Kingwood."

"Now his master and him are both gone," returned Maud, wiping her eyes; "and to tell you the truth, my good friend, I should not be very sorry to follow them, for the castle is grown a most doleful place, and I am tired of my situation. But now I think of it, what brought these strangers to the forest?"

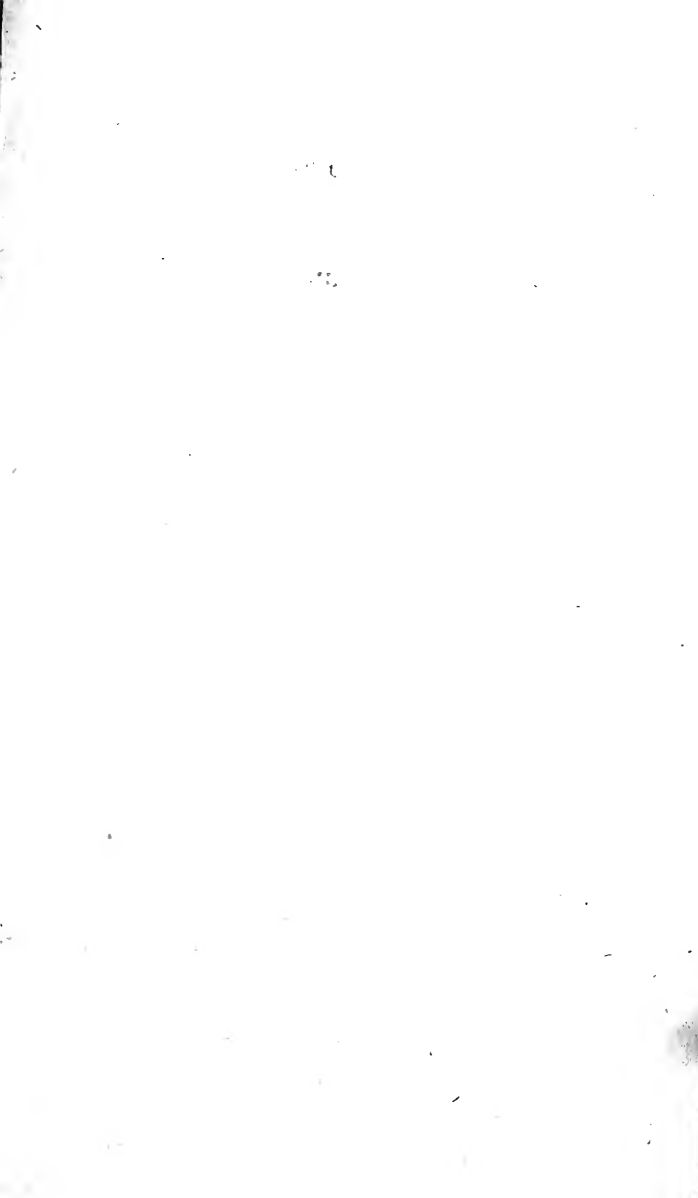
"I suppose Davie did not inquire their business," said the butler; "but he said he saw them yesterday at the house of Jamie Ross."

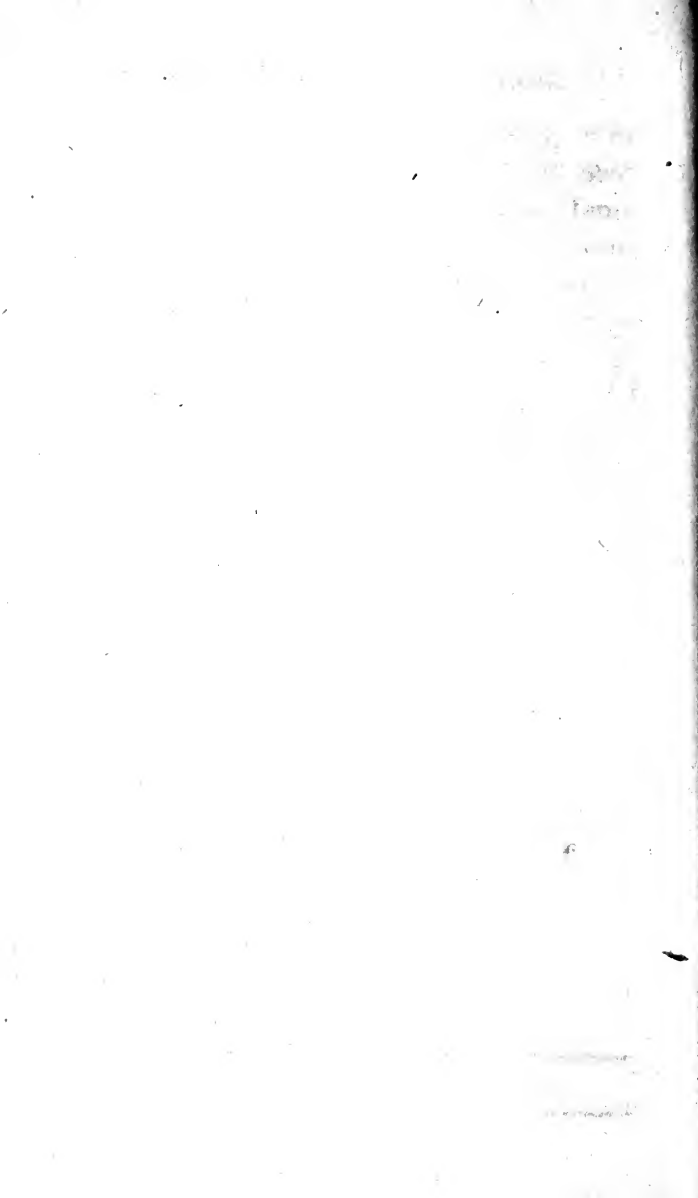
"Oh, if they are friends of his, all is well," returned Maud; "I was thinking these strangers might be the persons who contrive to gain admittance to the Wangle Villa; but if they are acquainted with Jamie Ross, they are not to be suspected."

“Certainly not,” said the butler, “for he would harbour no knaves. In all Scotland there is not a better man than Jamie Ross; for he has a heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness, and a hand always busy with works of charity: Jamie Ross is not only an honour to his native country, but to all mankind, and I wish the earl of Deveron were like him.”

“Like Jamie Ross!” replied Maud; “he is a rank weed. Every poor body blesses Jamie Ross, but I fear many have reason to curse Archibald Bruce.”

END OF VOL. II.







215.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 046432040